

LOVAT
DICKSON'S
MAGAZINE

DEVOTED SOLELY TO THE SHORT STORY

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The Editor will be glad to consider stories offered for publication and will endeavour to return unsuitable MSS. when they are accompanied by a stamped envelope. Neither the acceptance of and payment for a contribution, nor the sending of a proof, can be regarded as a guarantee of publication.

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An Invitation

IN the modern world of letters, periodicals like Governments come and go, form coalitions and disintegrate with bewildering rapidity. A magazine Editor, like any political ruler, would be a dictator if he could. But even though he may determine to guide the taste of the majority of his readers rather than be ruled by it, and deliberately give them a monthly bill of fare in which his own likes prevail, he will if he is wise take occasion to consult them and study their preferences. In the case of a newspaper frankly "popular" this is easy enough: its circulation forms an automatic test of success. The editor of a literary magazine, interested in quality rather than quantity, can have and should desire no such simple test; straw votes, counting of heads, consultation with his business manager will not help him.

Lovat Dickson's Magazine has now made its monthly appearance long enough to have won the support of a considerable number of regular and intelligently critical readers. From an examination of our sales figures it is, in fact, evident that most of our readers who are not actually subscribers make a practice of buying each issue from their bookseller when it appears. It is safe to assume, therefore, that the standard of

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the stories selected meets with the general approval of the public we set out in the first place to win. But as we have tried to avoid any tendency to uniformity of subject-matter or technique, and to make our choice as catholic as possible, we have afforded ample opportunity for our readers' criticism and discrimination.

We have every confidence, therefore, in inviting those who are interested to express their views upon the editor's selection of stories in this and earlier issues. "The Driver has his thoughts, and the Camel, he has his." The reader of this magazine is the Driver; the Camel, though he reserves the right to his own judgment, being a beast of some self-respect, would welcome an indication of the way the driver wants him to go. Some who may have had their feelings outraged by particular stories may be inclined to condemn the editor without considering any evidence in his favour. We shall be entertained, perhaps encouraged in our evil ways, by the proof of such lively interest. Others we hope will do us the compliment of recognising that *Lovat Dickson's Magazine* is serving a useful purpose in creating a wider interest in the short-story form.

In order to encourage criticism, we offer (1) a twelve-months' free subscription for the best article of not more than three thousand words on the contents of our August issue giving reasons for approval or disapproval of each story included, and (2) copies of any two books published by Lovat Dickson Ltd. for an article of the same length giving reasons for preferring one story from each of our first ten issues. More than one prize will be awarded if in the editor's opinion they are justified by the excellence of the contributions. Essays should reach our office by 1st September, and we reserve the right to publish them in future issues as space permits.

D. H. LAWRENCE

Strike-Pay

STRIKE-MONEY is paid in the Primitive Methodist Chapel. The crier was round quite early on Wednesday morning to say that paying would begin at ten o'clock.

The Primitive Methodist Chapel is a big barn of a place, built, designed, and paid for by the colliers themselves. But it threatened to fall down from its first form, so that a professional architect had to be hired at last to pull the place together.

It stands in the Square. Forty years ago, when Bryan and Wentworth opened their pits, they put up the "squares" of miners' dwellings. They are two great quadrangles of houses, enclosing a barren stretch of ground, littered with broken pots and rubbish, which forms a square, a great, sloping, lumpy playground for the children, a drying-ground for many women's washing.

Wednesday is still wash-day with some women. As the men clustered round the Chapel, they heard the thud-thud-thud of many pouches, women pounding away at the wash-tub with a wooden pestle. In the Square the white clothes were waving in the wind from a maze of clothes-lines, and here and there women were pegging out, calling to the

miners, or to the children who dodged under the flapping sheets.

Ben Townsend, the union agent, has a bad way of paying. He takes the men in order of his round, and calls them by name. A big, oratorical man with a grey beard, he sat at the table in the Chapel schoolroom, calling name after name. The room was crowded with colliers, and a great group pushed up outside. There was much confusion. Ben dodged from the Scargill Street list, to the Queen Street. For this Queen Street men were not prepared. They were not to the fore.

"Joseph Grooby—Joseph Grooby! Now, Joe, where are you?"

"Hold on a bit, Sorry!" cried Joe from outside. "I'm shovin' up."

There was a great noise from the men.

"I'm takin' Queen Street. All you Queen Street men should be ready. Here you are, Joe," said the union agent loudly.

"Five children!" said Joe, counting the money suspiciously.

"That's right, I think," came the mouthing voice. "Fifteen shillings, is it not?"

"A bob a kid," said the collier.

"Thomas Sedgwick.—How are you, Tom? Missis better?"

"Ay, 'er's shapin' nicely. Tha'rt hard at work to-day, Ben." This was a sarcasm on the idleness of a man who had given up the pit to become a Union agent.

"Yes. I rose at four to fetch the money."

"Dunna hurt thysen," was the retort, and the men laughed.

"No.—John Merfin!"

But the colliers, tired with waiting, excited by the strike spirit, began to rag. Merfin was young and dandiacal. He was choir-master at the Wesleyan Chapel.

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"Does your collar cut, John?" asked a sarcastic voice out of the crowd.

"Hymn Number Nine.

*'Diddle-diddle dumpling, my son John
Went to bed with his best suit on,'"*

came the solemn announcement.

Mr. Merfin, his white cuffs down to his knuckles, picked up his half-sovereign, and walked away loftily.

"Sam Coutts!" cried the paymaster.

"Now, lad, reckon it up," shouted the voice of the crowd, delighted.

Mr. Coutts was a straight-backed ne'er-do-well. He looked at his twelve shillings sheepishly.

"Another two bob—he had twins a-Monday night—get thy money, Sam, tha's earned it—tha's addled it, Sam; dunna go be-out it. Let him ha' the two bob for 'is twins, mister," came the clamour from the men around.

Sam Coutts stood grinning awkwardly.

"You should ha' given us notice, Sam," said the paymaster suavely. "We can make it all right for you next week——"

"Nay, nay, nay," shouted a voice. "Pay on delivery—the goods is there right enough."

"Get thy money, Sam, tha's addled it," became the universal cry, and the Union agent had to hand over another florin, to prevent a disturbance. Sam Coutts grinned with satisfaction.

"Good shot, Sam," the men exclaimed.

"Ephraim Wharmby," shouted the payman.

A lad came forward.

"Gi' him sixpence for what's on t' road," said a sly voice.

"Nay, nay," replied Ben Townsend; "pay on delivery."

There was a roar of laughter. The miners were in high spirits.

In the town they stood about in gangs, talking and laughing. Many sat on their heels in the market-place. In and out of the public-houses they went, and on every bar the half-sovereigns clicked.

"Comin' ter Nottingham wi' us, Ephraim?" said Sam Coutts, to the slender, pale young fellow of about twenty-two.

"I'm non walkin' that far of a gleamy day like this."

"He has na got the strength," said somebody, and a laugh went up.

"How's that?" asked another pertinent voice.

"He's a married man, mind yer," said Chris Smitheringale, "an' it ta'es a bit o' keepin' up."

The youth was teased in this manner for some time.

"Come on ter Nottingham wi's; tha'll be safe for a bit," said Coutts.

A gang set off, although it was only eleven o'clock. It was a nine-mile walk. The road was crowded with colliers travelling on foot to see the match between Notts and Aston Villa. In Ephraim's gang were Sam Coutts, with his fine shoulders and his extra florin, Chris Smitheringale, fat and smiling, and John Wharmby, a remarkable man, tall, erect as a soldier, black-haired and proud; he could play any musical instrument, he declared.

"I can play owt from a comb up'ards. If there's music to be got outer a thing, I back I'll get it. No matter what shape or form of instrument you set before me, it doesn't signify if I niver clapped eyes on it before, I's warrant I'll have a tune out of it in five minutes."

He beguiled the first two miles so. It was true, he had caused a sensation by introducing the mandoline into the townlet, filling the hearts of his fellow-colliers with pride as he sat on the platform in evening dress, a fine soldierly man, bowing his black head, and scratching the mewing mandoline

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with hands that had only to grasp the "instrument" to crush it entirely.

Chris stood a can round at the "White Bull" at Gilt Brook. John Wharmby took his turn at Kimberley top.

"We wunna drink again," they decided, "till we're at Cinder Hill. We'll non stop i' Nuttall."

They swung along the high-road under the budding trees. In Nuttall churchyard the crocuses blazed with yellow at the brim of the balanced, black yews. Yellow and purple crocuses pushed up over the graves, as if the churchyard were bursting out in tiny tongues of flame.

"Sithee," said Ephraim, who was an ostler down pit, "sithee, here comes the Colonel. Sithee at his 'osses, how they pick their toes up, the beauties!"

The Colonel drove past the men, who took no notice of him.

"Hast heard, Sorry," said Sam, "as they'm com'n out i' Germany, by the thousand, an' begun riotin'?"

"An' commin' out i' France simbitar," cried Chris.

The men all gave a chuckle.

"Sorry," shouted John Wharmby, much elated, "we oughtna ter go back under a twenty per zent. rise."

"We should get it," said Chris.

"An' easy! They can do nowt biout us, we'n on'y ter stop out long enough."

"I'm willin'," said Sam, and there was a laugh. The colliers looked at one another. A thrill went through them as if an electric current passed.

"We'n on'y ter stick out, an' we s'll see who's gaffer."

"Us!" cried Sam. "Why, what can they do again' us, if we come out all over th' world?"

"Nowt!" said John Wharmby. "Th' mesters is bobbin' about like corks on a rassivoy a'ready." There was a large

natural reservoir, like a lake, near Bestwood, and this supplied the simile.

Again there passed through the men that wave of elation, quickening their pulses. They chuckled in their throats. Beyond all consciousness was this sense of battle and triumph in the hearts of the working-men at this juncture.

It was suddenly suggested at Nuttall that they should go over the fields to Bulwell, and into Nottingham that way. They went single file across the fallow, past the wood, and over the railway, where now no trains were running. Two fields away was a troop of pit ponies. Of all colours, but chiefly of chestnut or brown, they clustered thick in the field, scarcely moving, and the two lines of trodden earth patches showed where fodder was placed down the field.

"Theer's the pit-'osses," said Sam. "Let's run 'em."

"It's like a circus turned out. See them skewbawd uns—seven skewbawd," said Ephraim.

The ponies were inert, unused to freedom. Occasionally one walked round. But there they stood, two thick lines of ruddy brown and pie-bald and white, across the trampled field. It was a beautiful day, mild, pale blue, a "growing day," as the men said, when there was the silence of swelling sap everywhere.

"Let's ha'e a ride," said Ephraim.

The younger men went up to the horses.

"Come on—co-ooop, Taffy—co-ooop, Ginger."

The horses tossed away. But having got over the excitement of being above-ground, the animals were feeling dazed and rather dreary. They missed the warmth and the life of the pit. They looked as if life were a blank to them.

Ephraim and Sam caught a couple of steeds, on whose backs they went careering round, driving the rest of the sluggish herd from end to end of the field. The horses were

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good specimens, on the whole, and in fine condition. But they were out of their element.

Performing too clever a feat, Ephraim went rolling from his mount. He was soon up again, chasing his horse. Again he was thrown. Then the men proceeded on their way.

They were drawing near to miserable Bulwell, when Ephraim, remembering his turn was coming to stand drinks, felt in his pocket for his beloved half-sovereign, his strike-pay. It was not there. Through all his pockets he went, his heart sinking like lead.

"Sam," he said, "I believe I'n lost that ha'ef a sovereign."

"Tha's got it somewheer about thee," said Chris.

They made him take off his coat and waistcoat. Chris examined the coat, Sam the waistcoat, whilst Ephraim searched his trousers.

"Well," said Chris, "I'n foraged this coat, an' it's non theer."

"An' I'll back my life as th' on'y bit a metal on this wa'scoat is the buttons," said Sam.

"An't it's non in my breeches," said Ephraim. He took off his boots and his stockings. The half-sovereign was not there. He had not another coin in his possession.

"Well," said Chris, "we mun go back an' look for it."

Back they went, four serious-hearted colliers, and searched the field, but in vain.

"Well," said Chris, "we s'll ha'e ter share wi' thee, that's a'."

"I'm willin'," said John Wharmby.

"An' me," said Sam.

"Two bob each," said Chris.

Ephraim, who was in the depths of despair, shamefully accepted their six shillings.

In Bulwell they called at a small public-house, which had

one long room with a brick floor, scrubbed benches and scrubbed tables. The central space was open. The place was full of colliers, who were drinking. There was a great deal of drinking during the strike, but not a vast amount drunk. Two men were playing skittles, and the rest were betting. The seconds sat on either side the skittle-board, holding caps of money, sixpences and coppers, the wagers of the "backers."

Sam, Chris and John Wharmby immediately put money on the man who had their favour. In the end Sam declared himself willing to play against the victor. He was the Bestwood champion. Chris and John Wharmby backed him heavily, and even Ephraim the Unhappy ventured sixpence.

In the end, Sam had won half-a-crown, with which he promptly stood drinks and bread-and-cheese for his comrades. At half-past one they set off again.

It was a good match between Notts and Villa—no goals at half-time, two-none for Notts at the finish. The colliers were hugely delighted, especially as Flint, the forward for Notts, who was an Underwood man well known to the four comrades, did some handsome work, putting the two goals through.

Ephraim determined to go home as soon as the match was over. He knew John Wharmby would be playing the piano at the "Punch Bowl," and Sam, who had a good tenor voice, singing, while Chris cut in with witticisms, until evening. So he bade them farewell, as he must get home. They, finding him somewhat of a damper on their spirits, let him go.

He was the sadder for having witnessed an accident near the football ground. A navvy working at some drainage, carting an iron tip-tub of mud and emptying it, had got with his horse on to the deep deposit of ooze which was crusted over. The crust had broken, the man had gone under the

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horse, and it was some time before the people had realised he had vanished. When they found his feet sticking out, and hauled him forth, he was dead, stifled dead in the mud. The horse was at length hauled out, after having its neck nearly pulled from the socket.

Ephraim went home vaguely impressed with a sense of death, and loss, and strife. Death was loss greater than his own, the strike was a battle greater than that he would presently have to fight.

He arrived home at seven o'clock, just when it had fallen dark. He lived in Queen Street with his young wife, to whom he had been married two months, and with his mother-in-law, a widow of sixty-four. Maud was the last child remaining unmarried, the last of eleven.

Ephraim went up the entry. The light was burning in the kitchen. His mother-in-law was a big, erect woman, with wrinkled loose face, and cold blue eyes. His wife was also large, with very vigorous fair hair, frizzy like unravelled rope. She had a quiet way of stepping, a certain cat-like stealth, in spite of her large build. She was five months pregnant.

"Might we ask wheer you've been to?" inquired Mrs. Marriott, very erect, very dangerous. She was only polite when she was very angry.

"I'n bin ter th' match."

"Oh, indeed!" said the mother-in-law. "And why couldn't we be told as you thought of jaunting off?"

"I didna know mysen," he answered, sticking to his broad Derbyshire.

"I suppose it popped into your mind, an' so you darted off," said the mother-in-law dangerously.

"I didna. It wor Chris Smitheringale who exed me."

"An' did you take much invitin'?"

"I didna want ter goo."

"But wasn't there enough man beside your jacket to say no?"

He did not answer. Down at the bottom he hated her. But he was, to use his own words, all messed up with having lost his strike-pay and with knowing the man was dead. So he was more helpless before his mother-in-law, whom he feared. His wife neither looked at him nor spoke, but kept her head bowed. He knew she was with her mother.

"Our Maud's been waitin' for some money, to get a few things," said the mother-in-law.

In silence, he put five-and-sixpence on the table.

"Take that up, Maud," said the mother.

Maud did so.

"You'll want it for us board, shan't you?" she asked, furtively, of her mother.

"Might I ask if there's nothing you want to buy yourself, first?"

"No, there's nothink I want," answered the daughter.

Mrs. Marriott took the silver and counted it.

"And do you," said the mother-in-law, towering upon the shrinking husband, but speaking slowly and stately, "do you think I'm going to keep you and your wife for five-and-sixpence a week?"

"It's a' I've got," he answered, sulkily.

"You've had a good jaunt, my sirs, if it's cost four-and-sixpence. You've started your game early, haven't you?"

He did not answer.

"It's a nice thing! Here's our Maud an' me been sitting since eleven o'clock this morning! Dinner waiting and cleared away, tea waiting and washed up; then in he comes crawling with five-and-sixpence. Five-and-sixpence for a man an' wife's board for a week, if you please!"

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Still he did not say anything.

"You must think something of yourself, Ephraim Wharmby!" said his mother-in-law. "You must think something of yourself. You suppose, do you, I'm going to keep you an' your wife, while you make a holiday, off on the nines to Nottingham, drink an' women."

"I've neither had drink nor women, as you know right well," he said.

"I'm glad we know summat about you. For you're that close, anybody'd think we was foreigners to you. You're a pretty little jockey, aren't you? Oh, it's a gala time for you, the strike is. That's all men strike for, indeed. They enjoy themselves, they do that. Ripping and racing and drinking, from morn till night, my sirs!"

"Is there ony tea for me?" he asked, in a temper.

"Hark at him! Hark-ye! Should I ask you whose house you think you're in? Kindly order me about, do. Oh, it makes him big, the strike does. See him land home after being out on the spree for hours, and give his orders, my sirs! Oh, Strike sets the men up, it does. Nothing have they to do but guzzle and gallivant to Nottingham. Their wives'll keep them, oh yes. So long as they get something to eat at home, what more do they want! What more *should* they want, prithee? Nothing! Let the women and children starve and scrape, but fill the man's belly, and let him have his fling. My sirs, indeed, I think so! Let tradesmen go—what do they matter! Let rent go. Let children get what they can catch. Only the man will see *he's* all right. But not here, though!"

"Are you goin' ter gi'e me ony bloody tea?"

His mother-in-law started up.

"If tha dares ter swear at me, I'll lay thee flat."

"Are yer—goin' ter—gi'e me—any blasted, ròtten, còssed,

bloody tèa ? ” he bawled, in a fury, accenting every other word deliberately.

“ Maud ! ” said the mother-in-law, cold and stately, “ if you gi’e him any tea after that, you’re a trollops.” Whereupon she sailed out to her other daughter’s.

Maud quietly got the tea ready.

“ Shall y’ave your dinner warmed up ? ” she asked.

“ Ay.”

She attended to him. Not that she was really meek. But—he was *her* man, not her mother’s.

The Man who Defied God¹

ONE of the first things I remember is a thunderstorm and a funeral. There was a certain connection between the two occurrences, which still after many years remain as if written in letters of fire in my memory.

Old man Köldberg was a gardener in Tosterup, had been for many long years. Where he had come from no one knew.

He lived in a little cottage by the river, near the church. The roof of the cottage was covered with house-leek, one wall with ivy, and the other with yellow ramblers. On a bench by the rose-bushes stood the beehives, covered with straw. The iris grew as thick as reeds by the shore of the river below the cottage.

On the south side of the garden were the vegetables, growing in well-tended beds. There were not only the usual eight kinds, from potatoes to parsley; Köldberg also cultivated asparagus and artichokes, various kinds of lettuce, celery, and a great many nameless delicacies.

The space between the cottage and the stone wall by the

¹ Translated from the Swedish by Paula Wiking.

road was devoted to flowers. The odour of mignonette and sweet lavender mingled with the sweet smell of jasmine; wallflowers and snapdragons were bright by the stone foundation of the cottage; peonies and dahlias glowed resplendent; red roses stood among the white ones like blood in snow, while the common daisy was the Cinderella of the lot, but all the more numerous instead. This lavishness of flowers was regarded as vanity in Tosterup. Which was to a certain extent justified, for flowers had no market value there. Not that they were considered too good to barter with, but because it occurred to no one that ornaments which grew by themselves should be paid for.

Köldberg was a peaceable man, who cultivated his vegetables, flowers and bees, and left his fellow-men alone. His figure was tall, thin, almost ascetic. He had a pale, wise, old face, and the grey eyes—I am certain of it—shone with goodness. And yet this old man was the bogey that children were frightened with. It was with a trembling hand that I once accepted the sweet he kindly offered me.

Old man Köldberg was queer, no doubt of that. He was not like others, and that is an unpardonable sin. For whoever does not follow the crowd is the rock in the stream, which can resist the storm, but gets the backwash.

He was a curious kind of gardener, for he never sold his vegetables, but ate them up himself. If people came to buy, he gave them whatever they liked. The consequence of this was that Köldberg rarely had the opportunity of giving away any of his crops. For he who asks the price of a gift is a beggar. And there were no such in Tosterup.

Köldberg had the right to eat up his own vegetables, no one could deny that. But where on earth did he get his meat? For man does not live on vegetables alone, like cattle. The butcher was more than willing to discuss this

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matter, whether anyone asked him to or not. But far be it from him to *assert* anything! Not for anything in the world did he want his words quoted. But he could swear by his immortal soul that Köldberg never bought as much meat as could be laid on a finger-nail. And people might believe whatever they liked. Which they did.

No one ever associated with Köldberg. How could one associate with such a person!

But there were even worse things about Köldberg. He was not only queer. He was a free-thinker,—that is, a heathen,—that is, a blasphemer. Nowadays people shrug their shoulders at such things, but it used to be a serious matter. And indeed there were numerous grave charges against Köldberg.

For one thing, Köldberg had never set his foot inside the church door, though he had it just beyond his gate. Certainly there were others, too, in Tosterup, who never went to church, but they were swearers and drinkers who freely proved what good Lutherans they were. Köldberg never swore, and none had ever seen him drunk.

It had been observed that he had once shut his dampers when the church bells began to ring. There could have been no mistake. Several church-goers had observed how the smoke had suddenly stopped coming out of his chimneys. So he preferred smoke to the sound of church bells! Here was food for reflection.

He had a book with black covers, which looked like a Bible, but there was not a Christian letter in it. None had ever been allowed to see that book. It was plain there was devilry in it.

One time when the bees were swarming, he had made himself stiff like a statue and looked like a tree, and in that way collected a flying swarm of bees on himself.

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He had a tame crow, which he petted instead of shooting. Crows should be shot. The soberer people admitted that the possession of the bird did not in itself mean very much. But a woman who passed the gardener's house had seen him standing in the garden with the crow on his shoulder. *And the crow was whispering in his ear.* What the crow said the woman could not make out, although she was quite close.

A cow-herd's boy had once amused himself with scratching a cross in the gravel of the road. From a distance he had seen Köldberg come down the road, stop by the cross, and make horrid conjuring signs over it.

Many, many years before, Köldberg had been seen by a little girl in conversation with a man of terrible appearance, who had never before and never since been seen in Tosterup. The man had a cloven foot, which he was vainly trying to hide in the grass. His other leg was wooden. So he might reasonably have been supposed at one time to have had two cloven feet. Or perhaps the wooden leg was an illusion! *And who is it that has two cloven feet?* The little girl was at once struck dumb by what she had seen, and never afterwards regained her power of speech. In three days she was dead.

The few people who called themselves enlightened, and refused to accept these and many other circumstances as binding, were in the end to get a terrible and decisive proof.

It was a hot, sultry day at the end of August, and there was electricity in the air. Since the morning, a heavy, blue-black bank of clouds had lain on the eastern horizon; it rose slowly and darkened; yellowish clouds, like rotting mushrooms, separated themselves from the blue-black bank; the sun turned pale as a lemon, and the shadows on the ground were corpse-blue; the air became heavier, almost sticky, and it was impossible to breathe; sudden whirls of dust rose

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from the road, though there was no wind. The milkmaids in the meadows hurried on with their work. They knew what was coming, for the milk turned in the buckets.

Towards evening the storm broke, surprising me as I was on the way to the inn on an errand. It began with a few heavy raindrops, which fell like raps of a whip into the road, making the dust fly. I hurried on as fast as my feet would carry me. When I got to the square where the inn lay, the thunder was bursting on all sides, and the rain streamed down.

It was one of those fantastically violent storms that sometimes break over the plains of South Sweden. The sky was on fire. The earth shook with the noise. There was rumbling and thundering long minutes at a time, like the overture in a gigantic orchestra. Then came a moment's anguished silence, followed by a shaking, deafening explosion. The orchestra began again. The sky was on fire.

In the middle of the square stood the fire-hose, surrounded by casks filled with water. Men stood in groups outside their houses and talked of the thunder, shouting into each other's ears. This was bad weather, but it might have been worse. From the top of the square we could see that four fires had broken out down in the plain, but one man had seen seven at one time. Outside the inn stood the fireguard, Mons the Piper, ready to blow his horn.

I slipped through the door of the inn.

"Close the door, boy!" cried the innkeeper's wife.

For draughts draw the lightning, and it was a strict rule that doors, windows, and dampers were to be kept closed while thunderstorms raged.

On a chair just inside the door sat the fire-chief, old Lutterlögn,¹ holding half a pint of beer. The water dripped from

¹ Translator's note : *Lutterlögn* means "double-dyed liar."

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his long, black, shiny coat. It was a newly invented kind of coat which the old man had got from a son in America. I felt it stealthily. It felt cold and slippery like an eel's skin. That coat was much talked about. It was made of rubber and was quite fire-proof,—so the son in America had written,—and it was thanks to the coat that Lutterlögn, in spite of age and infirmity, had been elected fire-chief.

The innkeeper's wife sat with a hymn-book in her hand, and the children crowding about her, fully dressed in their coats and all. The smallest girl, who had just been awakened and dressed, wept loudly.

In the flickering light, I saw a man sitting on a hassock by the counter. It was old man Köldberg, tapping gin out of a firkin.

A quick succession of flashes followed. The room turned light as day, and the rain stood like a glittering curtain of beads outside the window by the counter. The old man's profile was visible against the pane. He smiled and said,

“That's right. Give me light, give me light.”

The gin ran out of the tap.

The innkeeper's wife leaned her head on her hand and moaned,

“Oh, you godless creature! What will become of us?”

The old man got the last bottle filled, stowed it away in his bag, rose and went towards the door. I followed him. I wanted to be outside among the men. Wet and shivering, I joined the group in front of the door. But Köldberg leaned against the hitching-post with the bag in his hand.

And then it happened. A blinding flash of hell, a hissing and shrieking as of the thousandfold scratching of broken nails against silk, a report, a crack. The lightning had struck the post and split it. Köldberg fell forward. And all was

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in darkness. But the sudden, deep silence following the stroke of lightning was broken by a shrill, scornful laugh which filled the square. By the light of the next flash, we could see Köldberg standing upright. He shook his fist against the sky and screamed,

“ You’re a bad shot ! ”

His voice was drowned in the rumbling from above.

The lightning had crushed one of the old man’s wooden shoes. Only the brass framework was left round his stockinged foot.

My childish heart was paralysed with terror. Would not the hand of God smite the blasphemer? But the hand of God rested.

From that day, Köldberg was accursed, and everyone avoided him.

By what I have heard and discovered since I grew up, I believe I can understand what it was that turned old man Köldberg into a blasphemer.

Before Hagel became the Vicar of Tosterup, Doctor Curtilius had for many years shepherded the congregation. Curtilius was described as a quiet man, who passed much time in his study. He was well liked because of his gentle manner. His interest in religion, however, was considered slight, since it was expressed chiefly in deeds of charity to the poor and oppressed. Moreover, his sermons were short for the needs of that time.

The inhabitants of Tosterup considered Doctor Curtilius a little queer: he collected plants which he pressed and mounted on paper. To-day we know that he was a learned botanist, and had given his name to several variants of the *Aceracae* species.

People complained that the good Doctor was so little sociable. He took part only in the ritual feasts of his parish—

weddings, christenings, funerals,—and even these he always left early. Otherwise he associated only with Köldberg, which could not but cause talk. All the talk about Köldberg had not yet, to be sure, got well under way. But it was a fact that he never went to church. It never occurred to anyone that Curtilius himself would probably not have gone to church either, if his profession had not forced him to.

Köldberg took care of the vicarage garden, which he worked with untiring solicitude. Probably he took no pay for his work.

These two friends, the Vicar and the gardener, passed most evenings of the week in each other's company. Through Curtilius' housekeeper, it became known that they drank toddies. What they spoke about nobody knew. Perhaps they were silent.

But one morning Doctor Curtilius was found dead in his study. Heart failure, said the doctor. Six months later, Tosterup elected Vicar Hagel to the vacant post, and he was soon found to be a stern servant of the Lord.

Curtilius' death was a severe blow to the old gardener. Curtilius had been his only friend, a friend who had understood and liked him. In Curtilius he had found the finest and best qualities he had ever met with. When Köldberg stopped being the vicarage gardener, he transferred his services to his friend's burial place, which remained a delightful garden as long as Köldberg lived.

One of the first to visit the new Vicar was Köldberg. He arrived at the vicarage dressed in his best clothes. He scraped his shoes on the iron grill below the steps. He entered the hall and hung his hat and knobby stick on the usual hook to the left nearest the door. He knocked and entered.

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What happened inside was told by the ringer, who was at the time occupied with office work for the Vicar.

Köldberg wished the Vicar welcome to the parish, mentioned his friendship of many years' standing with Doctor Curtilius, and invited the Vicar to come and see his garden sometime when he was passing by on his way to church. The Vicar replied in a ceremonious speech. He said he had heard with sorrow that Köldberg had led poor Curtilius into the paths of iniquity and drinking. He expressed his hope that the Lord would have mercy on Curtilius' immortal soul. And he ended with a thundering admonition to Köldberg not to work in his garden on Sundays.

Trembling with rage, Köldberg left the vicarage, never to set foot in it again. He felt as if he had been turned out of his own home.

In the south-west corner of the vicarage garden, by the stone wall separating it from the road, stood the bush of black roses. Three years earlier, Köldberg had presented it to Curtilius as a precious treasure, the fruit of many years' grafting experiments. Now the bush bore only one flower, but that was a magnificent one. Large and heavy as a child's head in sleep, the black rose hung from its stalk.

When Köldberg had closed the wicket-gate behind him and walked down outside the wall, he stopped before the rose. His face lit up, and he bent over the wall to give it a farewell caress. But suddenly he jerked back his hand, pricked by a thorn. A drop of blood sprang from his finger. Köldberg knew that the black rose had never before borne a thorn. His features twisted as he lifted his stick; it whistled through the air, and the black rose fell as if it had been severed by a sabre cut. Köldberg ran away like a criminal. In all his life he had never trampled even a colt's-foot.

FRITIOF NILSSON

It was in the hour that Köldberg was turned away from the vicarage, to which he had come with the outstretched hand of friendship, that he became a blasphemer. During his long friendship with Curtilius, he had lived on terms of respectful neutrality with the Lord. He now made the mistake of identifying God with Vicar Hagel. The Vicar became to him the personification of self-righteousness, stupidity, and arrogance. In God, he hated and despised the Vicar. In the Vicar, he hated God.

It was a few years after the stroke of lightning outside the inn. Vicar Hagel sat one February day at the dinner-table, had eaten one pork chop and laid the second on his plate, when there came a message that old man Köldberg was lying at death's door. An itinerant pedlar had found him almost unconscious on the bench in the cottage by the river. The Vicar ate his second shop with dignity, for he felt he was acting in the discharge of his official duties. He dried the grease from the corners of his mouth, and slipped the table napkin into his breast pocket.

The Vicar thanked the Lord for the food he had received. Still in the discharge of his duties, he clambered into his spring-carriage and drove to Köldberg's cottage. In the discharge of his duties, he crossed Köldberg's threshold, accompanied by the grave-digger, who carried a leather case containing the chalice and wine.

On the bench by the tiled stove lay Köldberg, pale with approaching death. He opened his eyes and looked wearily at his visitors. He stretched out his hand, but the Vicar did not see it, because he was acting in the discharge of his official duties. He had already begun to speak. He spoke of blood-red sins, which are washed as white as snow; of the mercy of man, which was worth nothing, and of the mercy of God, which was everything; of repentance that

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unlocks the doors of heaven. At last he put his arm around Köldberg's neck, held the table napkin under his chin, and carried the chalice to the blue lips. Weakly, the dying man allowed the wine to fill his mouth, and already the Vicar was giving thanks to the Lord. But suddenly, by mobilising his last strength, Köldberg sat up. His wide-open eyes caused even the grave-digger to turn away. He spat the wine into the Vicar's face and died.

In the afternoon the people whispered that the Vicar had gone mad, and had tried to cut his throat. He had been seen driving through the village leaning back in his carriage, pale, with his eyes closed. His white collar had been red with blood. In the evening they all knew. Like wild-fire, the tale of Köldberg's terrible death had run through the village.

Köldberg was to be buried on the Sunday, and from three parishes people came to see his last journey, for it was expected that omens and miracles would occur by the grave of so great a sinner.

I accompanied my grandmother to church that Sunday. The snow whirled down over the plain. The horizon was gone. The grey-white universe was terrifyingly large compared to the small spot of the earth that we could see. I had on a thick black coat and red woollen mittens. Why do I remember that coat and those red mittens?

Sleighs drove down the road, but no sleigh-bells were heard. Occasionally a carriage would pass with people from the West, where the snow was not so good.

By the time the church bells began to ring, the churchyard was black with people. They trampled grave mounds, stepped on gravestones, climbed the trees to see better. The late-comers crowded the fields and meadows around the church. I imagine that in former days people collected like this at executions.

The grave was like a stretch of open water in the ice. No branches of fir covered its white edges or black walls. It was like a well. Literally. For the church was undermined by the river.

The crowd parted with difficulty to make way for the funeral procession. First came the Vicar. He looked like a judge. His eyes were hard and cold with zeal. Then followed the ringer, who looked like Jack Ketch without his axe. His black, cloven beard fluttered over a red neck-cloth; his lips were red as blood. He sang a monotonous hymn, punctuating the end of each verse by clearing his throat. At last came the body in an unpainted coffin, carried by four men. One of the four was the grave-digger, who was under the influence of gin.

The four bearers carefully manœuvred the coffin over the grave, and eased their shoulder-straps. The straps loosened, but the coffin was stuck, would not descend into the grave. The grave-digger swore under his breath. The shovels came out, and the grave was made broader,—in vain. The coffin was stuck. Then the grave-digger leaped on to the top of the coffin, and began jumping up and down on it. In vain. The coffin was stuck. There was utter silence in the churchyard as the crowd pressed forward in a breathless wave towards the grave. Only the cracking of a wooden cross could be heard, as it gave way under the weight of a foot. The miracle had occurred. The hallowed soil had refused to receive the body of the blasphemer.

The Vicar stood with his head bent, deep in prayer. And prayer gave him strength. He stretched his hand over the grave in the gesture of a blessing. The coffin fell with a crash, and stones and lumps of earth thumped dully on the lid. The Vicar's harsh voice carried even to the farthest spectator.

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"There you went crashing into hell."

That was all that was said over old man Köldberg's body.

The grave was quickly filled again. Not a flower was laid on the mound. On top lay a bone, cracked by the shovels.

The bells rang for service, and soon the churchyard was deserted. Only my grandmother and I remained by Köldberg's grave. I shook with cold, and was overcome with horror.

"Grandma, Grandma, I want to go home," I begged.

She did not reply. Her lips were moving slowly. She was saying the Lord's Prayer and a blessing.

Suddenly I burst into tears.

"Grandma," I asked, "is Köldberg in hell now?"

She put her hand gently on my head and replied,

"No, my lad. Whom men bury thus, God will surely receive into His Kingdom."

I looked up. Her old face had an expression of infinite certainty.

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The Ogress

By the time I was thirty-five I had had enough of being a governess. On the whole it is a wretched job. If you don't like the children, it is unbearable: if you allow yourself to become too attached to them you are preparing a tragedy for yourself when the moment comes for them to go to school, and for you to leave, go among strangers, and begin again. And sometimes, if the children become too fond of you, the mother grows jealous, and your peace of mind is wrecked by submerged antagonisms. No, I could stand no more of it. I determined to look out for a post as companion or housekeeper to an old lady. That, with a good employer, might prove a fairly pleasant, equable sort of life. With luck one might even make a friend.

I searched the columns of vacant situations in the daily papers and picked out the advertisement which seemed, on the whole, the most promising: "Old lady, widow, requires companion-housekeeper. Easy duties, one servant, salary £75." The place was Brightstone-on-Sea: that was an inducement. I like the sea, and Brightstone would combine the sea with the cheerfulness and movement of a good-sized town. I wrote and applied for the position. By

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return of post I received an answer, suggesting that I should pay my prospective employer, Mrs. Raughton, a two days' visit, "as a trial." It was a human, almost a friendly, suggestion, I thought, and as I sat in the train on my way to Brightstone, a few days later, I felt quite thrilled at the possibilities of my new life. The day, too, seemed to promise me good luck. It was warm and sunny; a delightful breeze fluttered through the open carriage-windows, and, outside, green fields, green woods full of soft lights and shadows, pleasant clean little towns and villages wheeled calmly and slowly past as if floating on a gradual tide. Then, looking ahead, I saw tall, bare downs advancing upon us on either side, and soon we plunged headlong into them. The vague, diffused noise of the train closed in to a rattling roar, the sunny world shrank to the narrow room of the third-class carriage, strange and inhuman under its cold electric light. Then with a culminating roar we burst into the living world again, and I felt that I had left the old, dreary years behind and emerged into a new life of sunlight and adventure.

At Brightstone a tram took me down through the steep, sprawling, tumbling town to the sea-front, and from there I had only a short walk, carrying my suitcase, to Mrs. Raughton's flat, which, I was delighted to find, overlooked the sea. It was at the top of one of those roomy old houses which have been converted into flats. When I had climbed the stairs and stood breathless at her door and rang the bell, my heart sank for the first time. Here I was, once again on the brink of the uncomfortable and precarious business of starting life afresh.

But next moment I was delightfully reassured, for the door was opened, not by a servant, but by a charming old lady, one of those people to whom one is instantly attracted. She was a slim little woman of about sixty, white-haired,

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with a thin, gentle little face and clear, straight blue eyes. She gave me a charming smile. "Oh, it must be Miss Woolacomb," she said. "Do come in."

I went in and she shut the door. "First, of course, you'd like to go to your room." She led me down a short passage and opened a door.

Left to myself, I opened my suitcase and heaved a sigh of relief. My misgivings were at an end. I knew at once that it would be impossible not to love an old lady with such a face and such eyes.

When I came out of my bedroom she met me in the hall. "Will you please come in here?" she said, and led me into a dining-room, where the table was laid for lunch. "I hope you had a pleasant journey."

"Very pleasant, thank you, Mrs. Raughton."

She raised her eyebrows. "Oh, but *I'm* not Mrs. Raughton. I'm Miss Bodkin, the companion. As soon as lunch is ready I must go and bring Mrs. Raughton in. She's very blind, you see. And, perhaps I'd better warn you, a little deaf too, though she doesn't confess to that." She smiled and coloured a little. "She will have it, in fact, that it's I that am deaf."

Three sharp strokes of a bell like the striking of a clock sounded from somewhere in the flat. Miss Bodkin hurried to the door. "Excuse me," she said; "Mrs. Raughton wants me."

The discovery that the charming old lady was not Mrs. Raughton had been a dreadful disappointment, and her final phrase about Mrs. Raughton's pretence in the matter of her deafness gave me a twinge of misgiving. I went over to the window. Being at the top of the house, it looked straight on to the sea, the roadway and the beach below being invisible unless you stood close to the pane and looked

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sharply down. In a few moments Miss Bodkin returned and joined me at the window.

"Do you like the sea?" she said. "I never tire of it. Whenever one looks, it's different. Even on cold rainy days it's refreshing, invigorating. I'm sure you'll find it a great resource."

"If I come," I said with a little laugh.

She glanced at me with her straight blue eyes. "You think you may not?"

"Oh, I've no idea," I said: "I haven't seen Mrs. Raughton."

The door opened. It was the maid bringing in lunch. "Ah," said Miss Bodkin. "I must go and help Mrs. Raughton in."

She went out, and the maid, when she had set the dishes on the table, went out too, leaving the door half open. I stood where Miss Bodkin had left me, still looking out over the sea. But I was hardly aware of the sea. A vague misgiving possessed me, and I laid back my ears, as it were, and listened for footsteps.

But the sound that made me turn at last was not footsteps, but the faint wheeze of the door-hinge. A large, heavy woman dressed in dark brown almost filled the doorway. There was hardly room for frail little Miss Bodkin, who held her arm. Mrs. Raughton stared with glazed, unseeing eyes into the room. Her eyes made me think of the eyes of a very old dog. "Is the window shut?" she asked in a deep voice.

"Yes, Mrs. Raughton."

Then in a loud whisper she asked: "Is she here? Is Miss What's-her-name here?"

"Miss Woolacomb. Yes, yes, she's here," Miss Bodkin whispered back, flushing a little with embarrassment.

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I went to meet the old woman. "I'm here, Mrs. Raughton," I said, remembering to raise my voice. "I was admiring the view."

I grasped a large, heavy, unresponsive hand, looked, with a sinking of the heart, into a massive clay-coloured face.

"Well, you can sit down and admire some lunch, Miss . . . Miss . . ." She turned her face to Miss Bodkin. "*What's* her name?" she whispered loudly.

"My name's Woolacomb," I said.

"Woolacomb! Woolacomb!" said the old woman. "Well, no doubt I shall remember it eventually. Are you hungry, Miss Woolacomb?"

"Yes, fairly hungry," I said, doing my best to respond to her harsh joviality.

She pawed her chair as if groping in a dark room and then lowered herself into it. "Bodkin's never hungry," she said; "are you, Bodkin? She nibbles her scrap and then sits watching me plod through my victuals. Not much fun for either of us."

Miss Bodkin took the head of the table, with Mrs. Raughton within easy reach on her right. My place was on Miss Bodkin's left, opposite the old woman, who was now, I saw, tucking her napkin under her chin. I was horribly ill at ease. I felt that Miss Bodkin and I were no match for this forbidding old creature. It was not her ponderous joviality in itself that repelled and crushed one: that might, with an effort, have been responded to in some sort of fashion if one had felt that there was any humanity behind it, any recognition of the person to whom it was directed. But there was none, no more than in a cannon barking cannon-balls. I sat in silence so as not to bring further assaults upon us, while Miss Bodkin carved the leg of mutton, cut up a first large plateful into manageable mouthfuls for her employer,

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and added broad beans and mashed potatoes, and then, when she had set the plate before her, carved for me. I ventured a glance at Mrs. Raughton. She was eating voraciously, groping with a fork among her food with surprising dexterity, entirely oblivious, it seemed, of her companions. It was an unexpected respite. I glanced at Miss Bodkin, who met my eyes with her gentle smile, and by that mutual glance I felt that we had agreed to eat in silence. It was as if we were lunching with a rather dangerous animal, a large baboon, mercifully engrossed in the joys of food. Not only the large mouth, but the whole of the heavy, loose face was at work, contracting, expanding, fantastically creasing and uncreasing, in the absorbing business of mastication. Miss Bodkin ate little and was soon finished: I myself ate slowly to avoid the embarrassment of sitting unoccupied, regulating my speed by an occasional glance at Mrs. Raughton's progress. In this way I contrived to finish at the same moment as she did. But I had miscalculated, for without a word she took up her plate in both hands and handed it back to Miss Bodkin.

Miss Bodkin had already carved another helping—I had supposed it was for the maid—and now the process was repeated, Mrs. Raughton's plate loaded again, and, with the meat cut up and vegetables added, placed before her once more. There was nothing for it: I had to sit idle now, like Miss Bodkin. Didn't she bring a book to meals, I wondered, when they were alone together? To sit idle, day by day, would be unbearable. The ten minutes—I suppose it can't have been more—during which we sat meek and idle in the presence of Mrs. Raughton's appetite, seemed an hour. At last she raised her face from her plate, emerged from the internal world of food. The glazed eyes, suspicious, questioning, like an old dog that has heard a distant

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sound, glared first at me, then at Miss Bodkin. But in a moment she had recollected herself, recollected us, and sat back in her chair. Her face focussed itself: she was going to speak.

"How old are you, Miss Wooland . . . Miss Woolworth . . . or whatever it is?"

"My name is Woolacomb and my age thirty-five," I said, and, the moment after, felt myself blush at the pertness of my reply.

"Thirty-five? I should have said older. Your voice is older. You needn't pretend to be younger than you are, you know. We've no men in the house, so youthful charm is not required." She paused, and then added with a short, harsh laugh, "Or why should I have Bodkin here?"

The maid came to clear and bring the sweets, and the old woman turned in her chair and stared with blind greed at the tray on the side-table, and then at the dishes as the maid brought them to the table. Once more, I saw, the presence of food was to protect us from Mrs. Raughton's attentions. She had her pudding in a bowl, to prevent her, I suppose, from shovelling it on to the table-cloth, and the bowl enhanced the effect of the wild beast at its dinner. Sure enough, we were safe for the rest of the meal; no more jocular attacks, no more cutting remarks, till she had got through her second helping and pushed back her chair. Then she fixed me with her glazed stare—the old dog had heard a suspicious sound in the distance again—and began to get out of her chair. "Now, Miss Woolacott," she said, and I felt that there was a deliberate challenge in her persistent forgetting of my name, "give me your arm. I want to have a talk with you in the drawing-room."

With a feeling of physical repulsion I offered her my arm, and we drifted ponderously towards the door. She turned

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her head as we went out. "We shan't want you, of course, Bodkin," she said over her shoulder. "Next door on the right," she told me; and when we had entered the drawing-room, "Now shut the door. Is the window shut?"

"Yes."

"That's right. I hate what Bodkin calls fresh air. She's perpetually opening windows. My chair's the one on the left of the fireplace."

I settled her in her chair, immensely relieved to escape from contact with her. "Sit down there," she said, pointing to a sofa. "Now, can you read?"

"Yes, Mrs. Raughton. I learnt to read about thirty years ago."

She snorted. "Don't be absurd! You know what I mean. Are you worth listening to? Bodkin isn't. She chitters along like a pair of scissors. I can't hear a word she's saying. You've probably noticed she's deaf; consequently she doesn't know how inaudible she is. Can you read clearly and well? That's what I want to know. You speak tolerably distinctly."

"Yes, I think so. I've had a good deal of practice."

"Well, we'll see. You shall read to me this evening. Do you know any good books? None of your Dickens and Thackeray and stuff. I like something spicy. Do you know of any spicy books?" She threw a leering significance into the question that made me hate her.

"Well . . ." I began.

"Well . . ." she mimicked. "You're all the same, you *lady-companions*, so *innocent*, so terribly *refined*." Her tone loaded us with scorn. "How is it you've all got stuck in the nursery, never grown into women of the world?"

"You seem to think I shan't suit you, Mrs. Raughton."

She turned a glazed surprise on me. "Eh? What?"

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Not suit me? Oh, I don't know about that. I dare say we shall get along. You can't very well help being better than Bodkin. You're accustomed to keeping house, I suppose?"

"I kept house for seven years for my mother, who was an invalid."

"That sounds promising, anyhow. Well, I've told Bodkin to take you out this afternoon and show you the shops we deal at, and the library. There are one or two books to go back and new ones to get. You can help Bodkin to choose them, and for goodness' sake keep her off the milk-and-water; ask the attendant for something spicy, do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Yes, you understand," she sneered. "But you won't, for all that. Far too lady-like, eh?"

I made no reply, and the old woman grunted sardonically. After a few more inquiries and grim comments, she dismissed me. "Now I must have my rest. Off you go to Bodkin. Is my bell there?" Her hand groped on the small table beside her chair and I noticed a little hand-bell, one of those dome-shaped things on a stand, rung by striking a knob on the top. I moved it against her hand. She struck it smartly. "There!" she said. "That means, Come at once. Off you go, before it brings Bodkin."

But before I reached the door, it was opened by Miss Bodkin, dressed for going out. "Did you want me, Mrs. Raughton?"

"Far from it, Bodkin," said the harsh voice. "Leave me in peace and take Miss Woolworth with you."

I felt an ecstasy of relief when the door was shut behind us. It was like escaping back into daylight, into human kindness and human goodness, from some horrible, oppressive

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nightmare. Without thinking what I did, I seized Miss Bodkin's arm. "Oh, how nice to see you again," I said.

She put her hand on mine. "One has to be patient," she said, "one has to remember she's blind."

"Heavens!" I said, "if she weren't."

"If she weren't, she wouldn't need us." She said it sweetly, naturally, without the least suggestion of priggishness. She paused in the hall. "Did you hear that we were to go out together? We might, if you like, start now."

"Yes," I said, "yes, do let us." The thought of leaving the flat, of getting out of Mrs. Raughton's reach, was blissful.

She took three novels from the hall chair and opened the front door. But, before we could escape, three loud tangs from the drawing-room stopped us. Little Miss Bodkin hurried back, and I heard her voice behind me. "Did you want me, Mrs. Raughton?"

From inside the room came the hateful voice. "The books, Bodkin! You've forgotten them, no doubt."

"No, Mrs. Raughton, I haven't forgotten." She rejoined me and we went out; but just as she was about to latch the front door the ominous bell clanged again. Miss Bodkin was on the point of pushing the door open, of running back once more, when on an irresistible impulse I seized the door-handle and softly clicked it shut. The little woman turned dismayed, astonished eyes to me, and then her lips smiled in shocked amusement.

"Come along," I said, taking her arm; "she was too late that time. We've gone."

"Oh, but she wants me."

"And if you go back she'll want you again." I drew her towards the stairs and she gave in.

Slowly we descended the long staircase that zigzagged down from landing to landing. "It's nice to live high up,"

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said Miss Bodkin, "but I find the climb rather trying nowadays. When one comes home tired from shopping, it's the last straw."

Outside, everything was alive with sunshine and breeze. The breeze flickered the leaves of trees and plants, the trimmings of one's hat and frock, the loose canvas of empty deck-chairs, the ears of pekes and spaniels that trotted after their owners along the footpaths. "You won't mind, I hope," said little Miss Bodkin, "if we walk rather slowly. I'm not very active nowadays, I'm afraid."

"How long have you lived with Mrs. Raughton?" I asked.

"Sixteen years," she said; "sixteen years last March."

Sixteen years! Sixteen years of hurrying to answer that bell, of endless nagging and rudeness in return for kindness and patience. "Heavens!" I said, "I'm not surprised you can't stand it any longer. What I can't understand is how you've stood it so long."

Her small, frail face with the clear blue eyes looked at me in surprise.

"Stand it no longer? Oh, I see what you mean. No, it's not that. It's Mrs. Raughton who is sending me away. One can't blame her. She's an invalid, you see, and needs a great deal of attention, and she feels that I'm no longer strong enough. I used to be very active, you see, but latterly . . ."

"Well," I said, "you're escaping at last. Tell me honestly, Miss Bodkin; aren't you relieved, aren't you delighted to be going, to be leaving it all, never to hear that bell again?"

She laughed. "Why, what an outburst, my dear! You speak as if I were escaping from a prison. Still, I confess I should be glad to have a little less to do. My difficulty is,

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where to go. I can hardly expect at my time of life to find another place."

"Must you find another place?"

"Well, I can't live on nothing," she said, as though the idea was a little comical, "and I can't impose myself on friends. More than one, it is true, have offered me a home, but one doesn't like to impose oneself."

"My dear Miss Bodkin," I said, touched almost to exasperation by her appalling modesty, her appalling unselfishness, "listen to me. Do, for goodness' sake, realise that it would be a blessing to anybody merely to have you in the house."

She laughed softly. "Well, really you're a very . . . what shall I say? . . . a very explosive young woman. And I thought you so quiet at first."

"It's you and Mrs. Raughton between you," I said, "that make me explosive."

"Mrs. Raughton won't like explosions," she remarked quietly.

We walked on in silence. I had been on the point of replying that Mrs. Raughton wasn't going to get the chance, that nothing in the world would induce me to be her companion, but something had checked me; and now I reflected that if I refused the post, and no one else could be found, Miss Bodkin would certainly, if asked, sacrifice herself and stay on. That must not happen; no, even if I had to take the post for a week or two, to get her safely out of it and settled elsewhere. If it had not been for little Miss Bodkin, in fact, I would certainly have told Mrs. Raughton, in our talk after lunch, that the situation would not suit me and would have left her then and there.

We turned up a side street away from the sea-front, into the town. Obviously the poor little woman was even feebler than I had thought: our progress was very slow.

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When we reached the library I made her sit down, saying that I would change the books. But what books was I to get for Mrs. Raughton? She had been right about the "spicy" ones; I was not going to make the smallest attempt to discover them. I had a fantastic longing to find some book that she would hate, some book with which, to-night, I could read her into a state of abject terror; but actually, of course, I simply asked the attendant for three new books which Mrs. Raughton had not yet had out, and we made our way slowly back to the sea-front.

"Wouldn't it be nice to sit on the front for a short time?" I said.

Miss Bodkin hesitated. "Ah, I wish we could," she said, "but I'm afraid I ought to get back. You see, I must not leave Mrs. Raughton for long."

I submitted. I felt that to urge her any more would merely disturb her; and soon, with many pauses on the landings while the poor little woman recovered her energy, we were climbing the stairs. As the door of the flat came into sight above us round the curve of the stairs, I felt that I had already lived there for weeks. In the three hours since my arrival it had already taken on a hateful familiarity, and it seemed that I was returning wearily, disgustedly, for the hundredth time to the life of drudgery and hatred there. I hoped that Mrs. Raughton might not hear our return, and that we might be able to sit and talk peacefully in the dining room for a while; but I was reckoning without Miss Bodkin. As soon as she had closed the door, breathless and exhausted as she was, she went at once to see if the old woman wanted anything. I would have given anything to be able to steal to my room, pack my bag, and clear out without a word. But Miss Bodkin held me prisoner. Her defencelessness and her irresistible sweetness had bound me to her inescap-

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ably. How could I possibly go till I was certain that her freedom was assured?

I was given tea alone in the dining-room. Miss Bodkin was in attendance on the ogress in the drawing-room.

Supper was at seven. As at lunch, Mrs. Raughton ate enormously and said nothing, and Miss Bodkin and I sat silently waiting for the meal to end. When it was over at last we went into the drawing-room.

"Now, Bodkin," said the old woman, "where are the new books? and we'll see if Miss Wooland is any better than you at reading. She couldn't be worse, that's one comfort."

I jumped up and went to get the books from the hall, to save Miss Bodkin the effort. Her thin face looked grey with weariness, and I whispered to her, as I passed her chair, to go to bed. She looked up brightly, smiled, and shook her head.

"Well, what have you got?" said Mrs. Raughton. "Something milk-and-watery, I'll be bound."

I read out the titles and authors: I had not noticed them till then. She pounced on the second one. "'The Virgin and the Gipsy'! Well, upon my word, that sounds a bit better. Well done, Miss Woolworth." She stared at me with her glazed dog's eyes, her lips twisted into a horrible, arch smile. "Yes, we'll start with that one: it sounds as if it would make Bodkin sit up."

I glanced shamefacedly at Miss Bodkin, hoping she would not think I had chosen the book, but she showed no sign of having heard Mrs. Raughton. She sat with one elbow propped on the arm of her narrow, upright chair, her hand shading her eyes. I began to read, remembering at first to raise my voice, but soon forgetting and dropping it to my normal pitch.

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The harsh voice broke in on me, making me jump. "Can't hear you, Miss Woolworth. Mumble, mumble, mumble. You maiden ladies, you virgins without gipsies, seem frightened of raising your voices. Go on; but louder, remember."

I continued. And as I read on, page after page, I felt as if I were reading in a vacuum, cut off from everything but the drone of distant trams and motors and the sense of the repellent, invisible presence of Mrs. Raughton opposite me. Occasionally she stirred heavily in her chair, I could hear her thick breathing, and the sense of her became more immediate and more repellent. From little Miss Bodkin on my left came not the faintest sound. How long, I wondered, did these readings last? Usually I rather like reading, but now the stale, airless room and the gross, greedy presence of the horrible old woman seemed to be draining all the energy out of me. I seemed to be giving, giving—unwillingly enough, heaven knows—and receiving nothing in return, no recognition, no human acceptance of what I gave. It was like pouring pail after pail of water into a sieve that always exorbitantly claimed more and always remained empty. At the end of a chapter I paused and glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece. I seemed to have been reading for hours: I could hardly believe that it was only nine o'clock.

"What are you stopping for?" came the harsh voice. "Now don't, for goodness' sake, say you're tired. That's what Bodkin always says." She screwed her mouth into an absurd button. "Just a short rest, Mrs. Raughton. I'm feeling a little tired."

The venom she put into her mimicry and her callousness in doing it in the hearing of the poor little woman stung me uncontrollably. I longed to throw the book in her face.

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"You forget, Mrs. Raughton," I said, trembling with anger, "that Miss Bodkin's in the room."

"Oh, no, she isn't," snapped the old horror. "You may think, just because I'm blind, that you can all do as you like; but you're wrong. I knew perfectly well when Bodkin slipped out of the room ten minutes ago."

For a moment she convinced me. I believed that Miss Bodkin must have gone quietly out without my noticing. I half turned my head, just enough to see that she was still in her chair. "You're mistaken, Mrs. Raughton," I said. "Miss Bodkin's still here."

"My good woman," she broke out, her voice thick with anger, "either you're lying or you're mad."

Her positiveness, her absolute conviction was staggering. Again I was shaken and I turned right round. Yes, I was right: Miss Bodkin was there. But there was something strange, something the matter. . . . I rose from my chair. The truth rushed upon me with sudden, appalling certainty: she was dead.

*Louisa, Lady Whitney*¹

WHEN I am staying in England long enough, I never fail to visit my friends the Parkers at their Wiltshire place. It is not easy for a Frenchman to picture the secluded felicity of English country-house life. Wiltshire, that beautiful downland countryside, with its gently swelling hills closely clothed with turf, has a plentiful sprinkling of small country houses, the homes of retired officers and diplomats. The supervision of a small estate, reading, horses, the fond care of house and garden, and visits to antique-shops in Bath, suffice to keep the lives of these unambitious men well filled; they incline to scorn lives more strenuous and restless. It is hardly credible, perhaps, but it is the plain truth that Colonel Parker and his wife, living a couple of hours' journey from London, have never been there since the Armistice.

What are the aims and hidden delights of these tranquil lives? The answer, I think, must be sought in joys of an æsthetic kind. The great pleasures of the year, to the Parkers, are a few pieces of Waterford glass (that rather coarse glass with a bluish sheen) added to their collection, a

¹ Translated by Hamish Miles.

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well-restored piece of woodwork, or a painting of some corner of their beloved countryside. Visits are paid to one house or another, to admire some new arrangement, a garden path straightened, a piece of tapestry repaired. It is a joy to display the result of so much effort to exacting critics, competent to note and appreciate the two-inch moulding whereby such-and-such a window will be refashioned to be exactly in accord with the original ones. The visitor rejoices in a success as much as the owner. And he goes spreading the good tidings through all Wiltshire: "Reggie has finished his library: it's perfection. . . . Mrs. Parker has finished her needlework for the new drawing-room chairs; the blend of colours is excellent." I confess that I relish these innocent enjoyments; after the ardours of Continental life, the superb frivolity of this country is always pleasantly restful.

One morning at breakfast I heard Mrs. Parker telling the Colonel that Ted Grove would be coming over after luncheon.

"Really?" he said. "That's delightful. . . . There's a man who will interest you," he added, turning to myself.

I understand Colonel Parker well enough to know that the only way of getting a story out of him is not to ask for it. So I asked no questions. When I joined my host on the lawn at lunch-time, I found with them a vigorous old man, with merry youthful eyes, conspicuous, like many elderly Englishmen, by the contrast between the glow of his sunburnt face and the snowy whiteness of his hair. I put him down as being perhaps sixty, and it was a surprise to learn later from Mrs. Parker that he was nearly eighty. She introduced him—"Our neighbour, Sir Edward Grove." And then the conversation interrupted by my arrival was resumed with animation: it was about the topiary art in Elizabethan times.

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Mrs. Parker belongs to the numerous and active class of gardening Englishwomen. She knows the Latin names of flowers, their habits, their favourite soils. Nobody is more skilled in contriving an herbaceous border in such a way that its successive flowerings edge a path with the changing continuity of a vividly coloured tapestry. She enters a garden with the professional eye of a doctor looking at a patient, or of an officer who divines instinctively the errors made in a regimental mess. She is acknowledged as Wiltshire's great expert on roses. She even carries on postal consultations, and spends whole mornings with nurserymen's catalogues open in front of her, composing for her personal friends beds of plants, which, she believes, will be expressive of their individual taste and character.

The talk, then, was of poppies and tulips, and as I had done my best to show a dutiful interest in the herbaceous borders, Sir Edward quietly remarked to Mrs. Parker: "Do you think your friend would like to see Lady Whitney's garden?" I had noticed that the Parkers asked after this lady's health in the way that one asks a husband about that of his wife, and knowing the strange complexity of British nomenclature, I had wondered whether she were his mother, or sister, or some relative. Mrs. Parker at once replied eagerly that nothing could be more interesting for me.

"All right," said Sir Edward. "But in that case I must hurry off, if I may, and go over ahead of you. Poor Lady Whitney is so old now that any surprise is apt to upset her."

We accompanied him across the fields as far as a small gate opening on to a golf-course, and, bareheaded in the sunshine, the tall old man strode away towards a large mansion visible among surrounding trees, about a mile from the Parkers' house.

"I really should tell you about Lady Whitney," remarked

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Mrs. Parker as we strolled back towards the chairs on the lawn.

“That’s a long story,” said the Colonel.

“You must help me, Jack, when we get to the Sudan,” she said. “But to start with,” she went on, turning to me, “you must know that Lady Whitney was ninety this year—can you imagine a woman born at the date of Queen Victoria’s coronation? Well, Louisa Cooper was the daughter of a squire down in this part of the country, the youngest of three sisters famed for their beauty. She had some Scottish blood through her mother. Some people considered that her sister Diana, who became Countess of Surrey, came nearer to perfection of beauty, and it is true that Louisa Cooper had a slightly aquiline nose; but her clear blue eyes, fresh complexion, perfect figure, and inborn dignity of movement, made her a famous woman in her generation as soon as she was presented at Court.

“London was astonished, and I think rather pained, when at the age of nineteen she married Lord Whitney, a widower in his fifties. The marriage had been forced on Louisa by her father, rather a tyrant, dazzled by the idea of an alliance with the Whitneys, whose great wealth, as well as their ancient lineage, made them supreme in the county. Many of Louisa’s women friends (so my mother used to say) thought that Lady Whitney would seek consolers. But they were wrong, although no woman was courted more. At Court, where the Queen treated her with the busy, maternal solicitude that she gave to her family, her servants and her various Dominions, Lady Whitney held a unique place. At Compiègne, where she was annually invited by Napoleon III, she was known as ‘the English beauty.’ In Vienna, a city then peopled with famous beauties, passers-by stopped to admire her.

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"Lord Whitney, a strange despotic person, kept her in luxury and slavery. He insisted on her being always with him, even when he was engaging in sports for which she did not care. Even in shooting-boxes in the Highlands he bade her come down to dinner in queenly gowns and wearing the wonderful jewellery with which he delighted to cover her. He heaped gifts upon her. She liked pictures, and she had only to express admiration of a great painter for him to start stirring up the picture-dealers of both hemispheres. You will see her wonderful Italian primitives in Whitney House. In fact, except for love, freedom, and the society of young men, he gave her everything that a woman can crave.

"The astonishing thing is she did not seem to resent either the age, or the jealousy, or the tyranny of her husband. I mentioned her Scottish blood. Perhaps it gave her religious scruples and a militant protestantism. In obedience to her husband she lived in what Englishmen then used to call the 'beau monde,' but she could hardly be said to belong to it. I wonder if you know who Dr. Cumming was?"

"I am afraid not."

"He was famous in his day—a clergyman who preached in London on the Apocalypse. He claimed to interpret the prophecies, and foretold the birth of the New Jerusalem for 1867. . . . Lady Whitney was a faithful attender at his sermons, and it used to be said that she used to invite her friends to share her pew in the little chapel in Grove Court, just as other women invited theirs to meet in their boxes at the Opera. . . . You will remember a passage in the Book of Revelation about a woman resplendent with the light of God. When Dr. Cumming quoted it, the congregation turned, instinctively perhaps, towards Lady Whitney.

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“When she was about thirty-five her husband had an apoplectic stroke which left him crippled. And as you may imagine, a woman so beautiful was courted by the most remarkable men of the time. She rebuffed them gently, with no display of false modesty, simply remarking that her husband’s condition obliged her more than ever to show reserve, and that she intended to devote herself to the education of her children. She had four, three of them boys.

“Lady Whitney entertained only a few trusted friends. One was Mr. Disraeli, who used to come and see her nearly every night after he left the House, and wrote to her, as he did to Lady Bradford, letters of extravagant, melancholy fondness. When Lord Whitney died, it was thought that she would soon marry again. But not so. Perhaps she felt that her children would be unhappy with a step-father; perhaps she was encouraged in the acceptance of widowhood by the example and counsel of the Queen. Who can say? The fact remains that she refused men and names of the most brilliant distinction.

“Lady Whitney was getting on for forty when her intimates began to notice the warm attentions paid to her by a young lieutenant, a great sportsman, universally popular because he was a crack shot and a fine horseman, named Ted Grove. He was fifteen years her junior, and in these Victorian days any other woman would have been sternly frowned upon for such a choice. But Lady Whitney’s past behaviour had by now entitled her to be bold. Her interest in the young man was regarded as maternal. Once again, it was not so. In point of fact, these two people were passionately in love.

“Sir Edward has often told me how, when the War Office offered him a post in the Sudan, Lady Whitney implored him to take it. ‘Why stay here?’ she said. ‘I can’t marry you, because before long my sons would be blaming

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me for giving them a step-father of their own age. . . . In a few years you yourself would be regretting the tie with an ageing woman. Of my own love for you I have no doubt; but it is just because I do love you that I wish to detach you from me. The post offered to you is one of the most flattering that an officer of your rank could hope for. I should not forgive you if you refused it. . . . By the time you come home I daresay I shall have lost this last deceptive gleam of youthfulness which is bemusing you. . . . And you yourself will have been transformed by danger and responsibility. . . . When that day comes we can safely meet again. But you must go, and at once.' ”

At that point Colonel Parker looked at his watch.

“ Yes, we must go,” he interrupted with a smile. “ We were to give Grove a quarter-of-an-hour, and it is quite twenty minutes since he left us. . . . Come along : you can go on with your story as we go.”

We continued our walk across the fields by the path leading to the small gate of the golf-course. It was a weekday and the ground was deserted. Whitney House stood gleaming amongst the trees on the skyline like a fairy-tale castle. And while we walked on in the warm sunshine Mrs. Parker continued her story :

“ Jack could tell you more than I can about the position of the British troops in the Sudan before Kitchener's victory ; but these details don't affect this story much. . . . The point is, as you will certainly remember, that all the country west of the Nile and beyond Khartum was at that time dangerous, being stirred up by fanatical agitators. Besides, it was very little known. It was the time when the great European powers were quarrelling over slices of Africa like selfish and greedy children. The territory I speak of was coveted by your country, by ours, and even by Belgium, to

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whom I think we had by a treaty yielded one province, which in any case didn't belong to us.

"Grove, with a handful of men, was entrusted with the occupation of a kingdom nearly as large as Scotland, and his mission was all the more difficult because it was only semi-official. Mr. Gladstone was then in power in England, and Mr. Gladstone was sincerely hostile to an imperialist policy. But a Cabinet is not always homogeneous. Some Ministers felt the necessity of forestalling a possible French advance, which would have cut off communications between Egypt and South Africa. (And not long afterwards, as it turned out, Marchand's mission showed that these ministers were quite right.) It was one of these dissentients who entrusted young Grove with a deliberately vague mission; and it may well be that Lady Whitney had something to do with the choice, for she had considerable power, not only through her friendship with the Queen, but through her many highly-placed admirers in both Houses.

"Grove's instructions were verbal, given to him by the Minister in person. . . . The point, as you shall see, is not without significance. . . . We ought to bear a little to the right, Jack, to avoid the green at the seventh hole. . . . Two years went by. . . . At first Lady Whitney received a fond letter from Grove every week. Then he plunged into unknown territory and letters became fewer. . . .

"One day the *Times* published a short message, ten lines or so, telling how Captain Grove's column had been caught in an ambush near Tawaisha: Lieutenant Winkler and four men had been killed, and the survivors, taking refuge in the small village of Fogo, had hurriedly fortified it and were there besieged by the forces of the rebel Zobeir. This news had come through a soldier disguised as a native, who, thanks to his knowledge of Arabic, had contrived to reach

Khartum. Grove's message stated that he had food and ammunition for a couple of months, but the message was already three weeks old. . . . The plight of these men seemed desperate.

"To understand the sequel to this, you must remember what I told you just now about Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet. There was Mr. Gladstone himself, opposed to all idea of conquest, talking of the Sudanese fanatics as if they were peaceable Liberal voters, but there were also Ministers more imperialist than Lord Beaconsfield ever was, who, although linked to the Prime Minister by political colours, were nevertheless fundamentally opposed to his doctrines.

"Jack will say I'm wrong in blaming my country's policy before a Frenchman. But what I want to express is not blame. Not at all: it is a trait which I admire in some of our statesmen, but a cruel one nevertheless. . . . Listen a moment. . . . More than once during the nineteenth century British governments have pushed into risky adventures men who were sacrificed in advance. If all went well they were rewarded, and the territory won by their madness was officially annexed. If things went wrong and caused too much outcry in Europe, they were disowned and abandoned to their fate. . . . I say it again: that may seem hard, but the safety of the Empire was then the paramount law, and other nations (your own included) were bitterly hostile to Britain. . . . And it is to our honour that our country always found men ready to play these tremendous stakes. . . .

"In the eyes of the Minister who conceived this expedition—I don't want to mention any names—young Grove was one of these pawns to be moved, as a lead, on the African chessboard. But when the Gambler raised the question of a rescue force in the Cabinet, he saw Mr. Gladstone's anger roused, and heard the table shake under that vigorous hand

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which felled the trees of Hawarden. The Prime Minister declared that he would not despatch one single squadron against the worthy citizens of the Sudan who were defending their country's liberty. The Minister in question saw that the game was up, and resigned himself to the loss of his stake, which consisted of Captain Grove, three N.C.O.'s, and a few men.

"Unfortunately for the Gambler, a certain lady had read the message in the *Times*, a lady well informed about State secrets, and knowing something about the horrible possibilities of captivity in the hands of the Dervishes. She was determined to save Captain Grove from paying the penalty. . . . You can hardly imagine how difficult and dangerous it was for a woman so well known and so irreproachable as Lady Whitney, in the flowering time of Victorian modesty, to intervene in favour of a young man who was known to be a close friend of hers.

"With you, in France, it is very seldom that a sentimental drama can put an abrupt and absolutely final end to anybody's social existence. And here, even to-day, in these post-war days, when people can write anything and say nearly anything, and can do a bit more than they say—even to-day I don't believe that a statesman gravely compromised in a divorce suit could readily remain in power. Imagine what the strictness of the Victorians must have been! Party leaders like Dilke and Parnell did not survive scandal socially. And women were simply transformed into ghosts. . . . Of course I don't think that in practice the Victorians were more moral than ourselves: they just concealed things, and it was disastrous to be found out.

"I tell you all this so that you may realise that Lady Whitney's intervention meant risking her good name in the eyes of the Queen and the Court circle, and of her own

children. But as soon as she heard of the decision reached, she sought an interview with the Gambler.

"He saw her. Nobody knows what passed that day between those two people. Picture the scene! The Minister, the cold, polished, distinguished man of affairs—but no, I mustn't describe him, as I said I would not mention his name. And Lady Whitney, very resolute, fixing the man with blue eyes which *could* be very stern. Grove says that there was mention of reasons of State, of a certain conversation at Whitney House of which a verbatim account was extant, of a gracious sovereign who insisted on her name being respected, even below the twentieth degree of latitude, of a powerful newspaper-owner who was at Lady Whitney's beck and call, and finally of a document which would be made public if the expedition was not saved. . . . No doubt each of the two was gauging the other's strength. The Minister, a moving orator, must have depicted the public scandal and its consequences. The woman must have braced herself to leave no loophole and to make it clearly understood that she would play every card in her hand."

"You ought to say," interrupted Colonel Parker, "that in his own heart the Minister was not hostile. Only the day before he had struggled to get the rescue force, and yielded only to the Cabinet's opposition. I daresay he was thinking about the value of this new ally as he listened to her, and was wondering if she would be strong enough to bend a government."

"Anyhow," Mrs. Parker went on, "whatever the exact course of the discussion, it struck the Gambler as of sufficient interest for him to go immediately and call on the Prime Minister, and to threaten him with a spectacular resignation if orders were not sent to Cairo for Grove's rescue. It was a moment of party instability, when a single resignation may

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be enough to compel an election in very unfavourable circumstances. . . . I should not like to insinuate that a Cabinet's policy can be transformed by such basely utilitarian motives. . . . But nevertheless, a few days later, some small well-armed vessels set off from Khartum; and amongst the consequences were the rescue of Grove, the wrath of the Mahdi, and later, perhaps, the death of Gordon.

"Grove returned to London as a hero. The Gambler, who was also a sportsman, recommended him for the D.S.O., a decoration then rare for a captain in his twenties. The fashionable world scanned the list of the year's *débutantes* for one who would share this gallant officer's name. He was besieged by the fair. The War Office and the Government of India quarrelled for him. He became—but there he is! Do you see him, Jack? He's just opened the orchard gate. . . ."

"But what a quick ending to your story, Mrs. Parker! I want to know more. . . . Did he really marry one of the *débutantes*? Did he remain true to Lady Whitney?"

"He has been true to her for forty-five years, although she has never consented to marry him. . . ."

I was going to ask another question, but Sir Edward Grove was now too near.

"At last!" he said. "You didn't walk so well as I did. Was Parker the slow-coach? Well, Lady Whitney is waiting for you in the park. . . . You'll see her yourself," he continued, turning to me, "you'll see how beautiful she is."

I admired the boyish enthusiasm of his voice. He had the shy delight of a young man introducing his fiancée to friends. Mrs. Parker looked at me with a smile.

We went in through the little gate, and after coming slowly through the orchard we walked up a splendid avenue of lime-trees. About half-way along it we met an old lady,

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very erect, slim and graceful, wearing one of those wide straw hats which one sees in Winterhalter's pictures, and leaning on a tall cane. Her black dress was sprinkled with tiny white flowers. She walked slowly, but with an air of authority and dignity which would have made her stand out anywhere. Her voice was clear. When she was told that I was French, she spoke to me about the Emperor Napoleon III, and about Gallifet, whom she had known well. Then she mentioned William II.

"He was an intolerable little boy!" she said. "And how he infuriated poor King Edward!"

"Did you know King Edward well?" I asked.

"Know him?" she echoed with surprise. "I knew him all my life. It was I who taught him to dance. . . . He was most industrious. . . . He used to count, *one, two, three—one, two, three*—out loud. . . ."

And then, as General Grove had stepped aside for a moment from our group to point out a tree to Mrs. Parker, she leaned towards me for an instant.

"Have you had a talk with Ted?" she asked. "Isn't he interesting? Oh, there aren't many men like that nowadays!"

And she, in her turn, spoke these words with youthful enthusiasm. Looking more boldly at her face, framed in its white tresses, I saw that her beauty was not dead, and that her blue eyes, a little stern, were gleaming.

"Lady Whitney," said Mrs. Parker. "I really think you should lop your limes."

That Pansy Smith

HEFFER FROST closed the door of his white-fronted cottage. He stood for a moment in the porch wreathed about with honeysuckle, and heard the shrill voice of the old woman, who kept house for him since his wife died, still making complaint about the work she had to do, the aches of her old bones, and the difficulties of attending to a five-months-old baby.

Heffer had not intended to go out that night. He had taken off his farm boots, had begun to smoke; but old Mrs. Jillson was too much for him.

"Your baby," she had kept on at him, "take more looken' after than any I've raised—that it do!"

The discomfort, the noise, a feeling that home was no home, drove Heffer out of the house.

It was a summer's evening. The hedges down the lane were green. The moon hung over the young fir plantation. When he looked further along, he could see, on the crest of the hill, the old church, and by the lych-gate what appeared to be a dab of red. Heffer knew that red. It was Pansy Smith's best frock. He looked quickly away. He did not want to see that spot of colour. It implied that not only

was Pansy waiting for him, but that she had made herself smart for his allurements.

It was only five months since his wife died, five months since the day he walked up that same hill behind her coffin, feeling that all his interest in existence was over. He had come back from the funeral to hear the crying of the child which had cost him her life; he had come back to put up with Mrs. Jillson's complaining and her uncertain cooking; he had come back to the desolation of day following day without comfort, without companionship, and he told himself that, had he not experienced it, he could never have believed how much happiness could go out with one woman.

Then "that Pansy Smith," as she was known all through the village, returned to her grandmother's cottage for a fortnight's holiday. She and Heffer met by accident, but the following day Pansy was strolling down the lane as he came back from work. There was purpose from the beginning with her. Heffer had only just realised whither he was drifting. The knowledge shocked him. It shamed him to think that his inclination should go out to another woman. It seemed an outrage on married propriety, that his manhood should clamour for Pansy Smith, who was as giddy as she was delectable. All the day he had asked himself was it possible that he could be thinking of putting Pansy in his first wife's place?

There was never even the beginning of a whisper against Mary. She was always asked to pour out at the school treat tea, along with Mrs. Reverent and the schoolmaster's wife. When she died, the procession of neighbours, walking two and two, reached from the graveside, through the churchyard gate, on to the road.

It was because he knew that never once during their six

THAT PANSY SMITH

years of married intimacy would Mary have approved of conduct which Pansy, barely in the courtship stage, would view as a compliment to her charms; it was because of the East Anglian's innate distrust of extremes, especially of an extreme of feeling, that he had cut across the fields when his work was done, and, once within doors, had determined not to go out again.

Yet, here was he in the garden, and the pitiful wail was following him.

"Mrs. Jillson don't do as she should by the poor mite," he told himself.

He meant that Pansy for a step-mother might surely be better than the callous old woman for a foster-mother. It was an excuse—a poor one, and he knew it.

"You be a proper fool, Heffer Frost, that you be," he told himself.

Yet he walked on, down the path, past the border of fragrant pinks.

"Mary planted they out," he reminded himself.

But their perfume was something to him this night that the odour of flowers had never been before. There was a bunch of lilies, too, with their white heads raised to the glimmer in the summer's evening sky, and they made him shiver. It was as if he looked into a woman's eyes. Not into any woman's—into one woman's eyes.

He swung open the gate.

The "Red Lion" was at the opposite end of the village. He had never been in the habit of frequenting public-houses. But might not the tap-room be a more seemly place than the churchyard, if he and Pansy were alone in it?

He took half a dozen steps down the street; wheeled round, and so hurriedly did he mount the hill that, when he entered the churchyard, he was out of breath.

MARIAN BOWER

"You've kept me waiten' for you, Heffer Frost," began Pansy Smith.

"I didn't mean to come," he told her.

"Why didn't you stay at home, then?"

"I was drove out."

"Then why didn't you go to the 'Red Lion'? You'd have been made welcome there."

"I'd rather have gone," Heffer declared.

Pansy laughed softly. "Heffer Frost," she said, "how soon will you give up tryen' to pass me by when you know you want to stay with me?"

"When I'm wi' you, there's nothen' about it, but that I be wi' you," Heffer admitted.

"And when you're gone away?"

"Pansy," asked Heffer, "how soon be you a-goen' back to your placen'?"

"I'm not goen' back," she told him. "And," she added, "you know why."

"I haven't given you no cause to send back word to your mistress," Heffer began. Then he threw up his arms as a swimmer does when he is overpowered by the sea. "Pansy!" he burst forth. "They say agin' you all down the village."

"Envy and spite," dismissed Pansy.

"They say 'bout you and Jack Hurrell."

"They'll say agin' you, Heffer Frost, for goen' with me these ten days past," answered Pansy. She put a hand on either hip. She raised her great, gypsy eyes, looked at the big man before her, and she laughed.

"Heffer Frost," she said, "you want me, and you know it. You want me that much that even if the worst that the village say about Jack Hurrell and me was true——"

"Ain't it true?"

Pansy laughed again. "Take me or leave me," she said.

THAT PANSY SMITH

"Be it true?" Heffer demanded. "I'll have it straight. Did Jack Hurrell get all he wanted off of you and then give you the go-by?"

The girl went through the gate, shut it, held it to. Heffer shook it. But Pansy was strong, and if he wrenched it open, he might hurt her. He vaulted it, stood by her side.

"My!" she said. "You do want me proper."

"Pansy!" ground out Heffer Frost. "I ain't a man no more now. It's the same as if you'd 'witched I. You only look on I with your eyes, and I fare as weak as a blade of grass in a tempest. I can't think of no one, nor nothen' else. I've tried to put you out of me mind. I've wholly tried, that I have! I'd never set me eyes on you again, if I could get away and stop away. . . . Marry me!"

"Marry you!" the girl exclaimed.

"Soon as the Reverent's through with publishin' us, up there," and he jerked a thumb towards the church.

"The likes of you want to marry the likes of me?" said Pansy.

"I tell you," he answered; "you've got me through and through. I never knew afore, that a man could be upturned for a woman as I be for you."

"Then you was never wholly flustered for Mary?" put in Pansy.

"Leave Mary alone," returned Heffer.

"I don't want to say anything about her, if you're for letting her go by," answered Pansy.

"I ain't letten' her go by," said Heffer. "I allus knew she were a sight too good for I. But now, she seems that high up, and me that low down, that it isn't for such as me to say her name. I've lost Mary," bewailed Heffer. "Lost her all for you, Pansy. You can't do no other but take I now you know what you've done to I."

MARIAN BOWER

Pansy looked at the big man, her mouth twisted with an odd smile.

"I didn't think you'd ha' wanted to take I to church."

She gave Heffer a moment to recover from his amazement.

"How do you know," she brazened out, "I wouldn't have come to you without?"

"Pansy Smith," answered Heffer Frost, "I don't know no more 'bout you than that pore mite down at mine. But I do know 'bout meself. You've drove me wholly crazed; but I'd liefer put a butcher's knife round me throat than make aught but an honest woman of you."

She looked up at him. Her lips twitched, trembled.

"You're as pitiful as a little child," he exclaimed.

She crept close to him, put her arms round him, rested her face against his.

"Heffer," she breathed, "there isn't over much good in me, but if I can help it, I shan't ferget how you've done by me to-night. I'll be a proper wife to you. There shan't be no buttons wanten' on yer shirt, and when you come home to dinner, you'll find it waiten'."

"And you—you'll be waiten' for I?"

"If I keep in the same mind as I am now."

"There 'ont be no changen', Pansy?"

The girl paused.

"Days 'ull be dreadful much the same," she said, "liven' allus in this village. I never could stand it. I've gone away ever since I could do for meself. But I'll put up with it fer you. I'll try all that's in me to put up with it fer you. I do mean to do my best by you, Heffer."

"You're that to me," he told her, and he caught her tightly to him. "You're that to me. I'm wholly soft about you!"

He was surprised to find himself articulate about his own

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passion : the Frosts had never been easy talkers. And then he told Pansy again how he loved her, and a flood seemed to rise within him. He told her how beautiful were the changing grey and green of her eyes, how wonderful the wave of her hair, how the pink of her cheeks was more lovely than the tint of a rose, and he said all the things he had never once said to Mary, who was so perfect, both as a woman and a wife.

* * *

The next evening, Heffer went up the hill to the churchyard again. This time he was there first. At length Pansy came, not wearing the red dress, but in her dark blue overall.

"Hadn't time to change," she announced. "I've been kept."

"What kep' yer?"

"Jack Hurrell have come back. He came to see me."

"Pansy," Heffer demanded, "just you shut the door in Jack Hurrell's face next time he come to see yer."

"Why should I?"

"You belong to I. You've give yerself to I. You'll send that Jack Hurrell 'bout his business next time you see he?"

The girl did not answer.

"You will," Heffer repeated. "D'ye hear what I say? You'll send Jack Hurrell 'bout his business."

"You give yer orders, and no mistake, Heffer Frost," Pansy flung at him.

"D'ye hear! You will!" he persisted.

"Jack have been all over the country," Pansy said. "He's earne' big money. He can go to the pictures every night if he have a mind. He've got a ring on his finger, and he brought me these."

MARIAN BOWER

She held out her arm, showed half a dozen glass bangles pushed up it.

"Take them off!" commanded Heffer Frost.

"No one else in the village have got any."

"I tell you," answered Heffer, "take them off."

"Jack Hurrell put 'em on himself."

"Then I'll take 'em off agin."

Heffer seized Pansy's arm. He pushed down the first glittering red ring, stopped.

"It's warm as warm," he muttered.

Pansy let it slip over her hand on to his palm.

"Now," she said, "what next?"

Heffer dropped it, put his heel on it.

"No one's goen' to give you fine things but me," he said.

"Have you got money to buy me as many as these?" asked Pansy, and she let the remaining bangles ring one against another as they fell to her wrist.

"All I ha' got be yours," Heffer cried out.

Leisurely the girl drew off a white ring, a blue, all the five; one by one, and placed them in Heffer's hand.

"You've a deal to make up to me for," she said. "Jack's real set on me now. If he couldn't get me no other way this time, maybe he'd take me to church too."

"Be quiet!" Heffer Frost cried out. "How durst you say to me face, maybe another man would take you to church and maybe he wouldn't! You ain't a light woman. . . . You ain't?"

He looked at her. He wanted an answer. He would have an answer.

"Go on with you, for a fool!" she blurted out.

"That's it," declared Heffer. "I knew that 'ud be it. You was kidden' I. But don't you never talk no more as if there was a maybe 'bout you bein' what you oughter be."

THAT PANSY SMITH

"Would you leave me if I did?" Pansy taunted.

Heffer Frost threw up his head.

"Pansy Smith," he answered, "if I'd the sense of a louse, I'd leave you—now."

"I won't have no second place with you," the girl cried out. "If you think you're goen' to cast it up at me that your wife was well spoke of, and I'm only Flounce-about Pansy, then I don't marry you."

"You've got to marry me!" Heffer declared.

"That's for me to say," Pansy answered.

"Hear this," muttered Heffer, and he caught her by both hands, held her tight. "I'll have you for my wife. D'ye hear? I'll have you for my wife, Pansy Smith—as sure as my name's Heffer Frost."

* * *

It was not a month later that Heffer brought Pansy home to his cottage. He had plucked up every weed in the garden for her coming, repainted the door. Inside, he papered the living-room with a design of pansies in clusters on a white ground; upstairs he put the rose he gathered the last thing before he went to church in a vase he had bought the previous day, and set it on the little varnished dressing-table.

When he and Pansy got back—they had been a half-day trip to the seaside—they were greeted by the wail of the baby, and a voice called down the stairs that the child "couldn't be got to sleep nohow."

"Mrs. Jillson," said Heffer to Pansy. "She was bound to stay 'til we got home. But she shall go quick now. I don't want no one in the house but you and me."

"When Mrs. Jillson go, she can take the baby with her," said Pansy.

"Take the baby!" said Heffer. "You ain't sayen' that serious, Pansy?"

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Pansy came up and put her arms about him. "Just for this once," she asked. "Just for to-night."

He stood stiff, unresponsive even to her proximity.

"Just for this once," went on Pansy. "Just let's be by ourselves to-night. You can fetch your baby back in the mornen'. Just this once. That's the first thing I've asked of you since I stood up by your side in the church."

"Well—just this once," he answered.

"If you want to fetch the little mite back in the mornen', you shall," Pansy told him.

He gave Mrs. Jillson money. Unwillingly she took the infant with her. "Nobody want your baby," she told Heffer. "That's an almighty pity she be so healthy."

"Hold yer tongue!" said Heffer. "How durst you say that?"

"That ain't the first time I've known the second wife not want the first wife's leavens'," said Mrs. Jillson.

He all but took the baby from her, recollected his promise to Pansy, pushed out the old woman and the child, and banged the door.

"Now," said Pansy, when he came back to her, "you and me, by our two selves. This is like a wedden' day."

"I oughtn't to have done it," he answered. "I've turned out me own flesh and blood. My girl," he went on, "you make I that weak, I can't say No to you. . . . Don't never . . . don't you never do nothen' what'd shame I afore me own self. Shame allus burns . . . but the shame you'd put on I, that'd burn worse'n Hell. 'Haps that'd burn so bad it'd get all of what's in me fer you. . . ."

"You'll love me as long as I've a mind you should," returned Pansy.

He looked at her startled, displeased.

THAT PANSY SMITH

The next moment she was up against him, telling him all he was to her.

* * *

Next morning, Heffer Frost was late in getting to work; the next evening, as he left the hay-field, Pansy was by the gate, waiting for him. They walked home hand in hand.

"Just another evenen' with you and me alone together," she said when he made a step onward past the garden gate.

He shook his head.

"I'll be upstairs and never able to sit by you, if I have to hush the baby to sleep," Pansy told him.

He shook his head again.

"Two evenens," said Pansy. "That isn't much to ask you, and you and me will never be married again."

"To-morrow then," he yielded. "To-morrow, and not a day more."

"To-morrow," Pansy answered.

But after tea the next day, Pansy especially needed his help. A box that she had left in London had come, and in it was some muslin which she wanted to drape round the deal dressing-table.

"It's as ugly as ugly now," she told him. "Do fetch a hammer quick."

That she should despise his furniture hurt him. The little dressing-table and the washstand to match had seemed to him quite grand when he had saved up to furnish the cottage before his first marriage.

When he came upstairs again, Pansy had unpacked her things. He stood looking at them, fingering them. There was a wooden backed hair-brush enamelled red, a hand mirror, bought for twopence at a rummage sale, treated in the same way, and for a pin-cushion, a black monkey with a red ribbon round its neck.

"My girl," he said, "I don't know nothen' of women like you. I've never seen gaudies like these afore. These wholly fine things ain't fer the likes o' we."

"Why should you mind if I do have a few pretty things?" Pansy asked him.

"Mind!" Heffer answered. "It ain't that. . . . I'd give you the Queen's crown, with all the jewels in it, if I could get it for you . . . but to see that brush painted red at the back, and that peeren' glass—that make me feared——"

"Feared!" she echoed.

Heffer kept to his point. "Wholly feared," he said. "I say to meself, 'What do you know, Heffer Frost, of women what use they things?'"

She told him he was an old silly, and then she held out a length of soft printed material.

"Cost ten-three a yard," she said. "I bought it for a dress. Nice for bus outens to Hampton Court—but I shan't go there any more." She sighed, held the flowered muslin against the dressing-table. "It'll do for here," she said, and then she showed him how to nail it up, and now and again he paused to kiss her, and sometimes she would slip her hand into his, and then the work would cease. So, eventually, when he said he must get on his coat and start for Mrs. Jillson's, Pansy reminded him that if the baby were not asleep, she ought to be.

It came to the end of the week, and still Pansy had excellent reasons for putting off the baby's return, and it was not at the end of the next week, nor at the end of the next month, when Heffer came home one Saturday at dinner-time with his jaw set, and a grim look on his face.

"Pansy," he said, "had you heard tell my baby was took wholly bad?"

"I did hear somethen'," Pansy admitted.

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"Did you hear that they're cryen' shame on me all down the village, for not looken' after me own child?"

"If the street wasn't sayen' agin you, it would be agin someone else," retorted Pansy.

"Mrs. Jillson haven't done by my child as she ought," Heffer went on.

"That's what I think myself," Pansy told him.

"And you never stirred a hand!"

"But I did."

"What did yer do?"

"I advertised her."

"Advertised—what?" demanded Heffer Frost.

"Your baby."

"You advertised my baby!" repeated the man.

Pansy brought a copy of a London newspaper out of the dresser drawer. She folded it, laid it before him.

"You read that," she said.

He glanced at it once, looked up incredulous. Pansy met his look with a smile.

Then he read the advertisement aloud.

"Will any kind lady adopt a girl baby? Blue eyes. Must have a good home."

"You see," said Pansy. "I was pertickler about a good home."

"A good home!" repeated Heffer.

"There'll be nothen' to pay," Pansy assured him.

"Nothen' to pay?"

"Just think what goes out to Mrs. Jillson every week."

Heffer Frost came up and leaned across the table. He looked his wife full in the face.

"My!" cried out Pansy. "You take your time about losing your temper, you do! If you want to fly out against me, do it and be quick!"

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"You're asken' me to sell my own child," Heffer began.

"Not sell," said Pansy. "What nasty notions you do get into your head! Your baby have lost her mother. I'm putten' meself about to find her a new one, and all the thanks I get is you gloweren' at me as you was a mad bull."

Heffer Frost brought his fist down with a bang.

"My child won't go to any home but mine," he declared. "I'll fetch her back afore I sit down to my dinner, and when she come back, you'll do your best by her."

Pansy put her hands on her hips and laughed.

"There's things I'll do, and things I won't do," she said. "And there's things I'll put up with and things I won't stand; but there's one thing I will have. As long as I'm a wife to you, you'll think of me first, Heffer Frost."

"Who else do I ever think of afore you?" groaned Heffer.

"Of your first wife's baby. It isn't if I will or I won't . . . if I want her or I don't. Because you want her, your baby's to come back here!"

"That's it," said Heffer. "The pore mite ha' got to come and live under her own father's roof."

But the puny little thing was too ill to move that day, and when the doctor said it was safe, it was Pansy who fetched her, and Pansy who, once within their own cottage, washed the child, put on it clean clothes, made up a bed on two chairs in the living-room, and carefully prepared the food according to instructions.

"You be a rare hand with the poor mite," said Heffer when he came home the first evening after the child's arrival.

Pansy indicated to him that the child was asleep and he must not talk. She informed him by signs that he must put the kettle on to boil himself, and make his own tea.

THAT PANSY SMITH

"I knew you'd take heart and soul to the little mite once you had her to do for," he told Pansy.

"She's no better than a bag of bones."

"You'll mend that, my girl."

He came close, but at that moment Pansy chanced to take the child into her arms.

"What a real mother you look!" Heffer exclaimed.

"Take care," Pansy answered. "If you press up against me you might wake her."

"Soon," he said, and he laughed happily, "it'll be my turn to be jealous of you with the baby."

But when he followed Pansy upstairs—she had gone first to give the baby her bottle—he found a bed had been made for him in a little back room.

"Your baby want all the fresh air she can get," Pansy said when Heffer asked the meaning of the new arrangement. "Her and me's quite enough in my bed."

She shut the door in Heffer's face. He stood before it, but the baby began to cough, and he told himself he ought to put up with being turned out for once.

The next night it was the same, and again Heffer heard the same excuse. At the end of the week, he brought home a wicker cradle and its bed-clothes.

"This can stand alongside our bed," he said.

"That didn't cost nothen'," said Pansy, as she eyed the cradle and its fittings. "You must have some money to spend, though you keep me pinched enough."

"I parted with me watch," Heffer answered.

"What! the gold one?" exclaimed Pansy. "That was your first wife's."

That evening, when Heffer tried to enter Pansy's room, he found the door locked. He demanded admittance and received no answer. He shook it, and heard Pansy laugh.

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Then he asked her what she meant by banishing him, and received no reply.

"I'll stand up agin' the door 'til you do let I in!" he shouted.

"You can do as you like about that," Pansy answered.

"I'll bang 'til you're forced to let I in."

"Loven' father you are, to keep your own little daughter from sleepen' all night, and the poor child only just gotten' round," Pansy called back.

The next morning Heffer demanded an explanation, and Pansy told him that he could have her, or he could have the baby, but he could not have both his wife and the baby.

"Then," said Heffer, "you haven't been putten' me off because of the child; you've been putten' me off to spite me."

After that, the baby was invited to smile at Pansy whenever Heffer was by, and Pansy sang when she rocked the child to sleep.

"This can't go on," Heffer said at last. "You're driven' me crazy, Pansy."

"I've told you. You can have me or your baby."

"Damn 'e! She on't never go back to Mrs. Jillson's no more," swore Heffer.

"I don't want her to. There's a good home waiten' for her. A lady answered the advertisement. She came down yesterday. She've been writen' to me for weeks, but I wouldn't let her come 'til the baby had got some fat on her bones. The lady said she was pertickler about a healthy child."

Pansy touched the baby's dimpled cheek with her forefinger.

"I've got her on proper, haven't I?" she asked. "The

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lady wouldn't have thought anythen' of her if she'd seen her when I took her from Mrs. Jillson's."

"You stand afore me," cried out Heffer, "and tell me you've been fattenen' my child to sell?"

The next day, a wagon load of barley, the last of four consignments to be delivered on alternate Wednesdays, was to take to St. Osyth (locally known as Toosey), the market town. On the three previous occasions, Heffer Frost was home again for tea. This time a mishap to the lorry delayed him, and it was nearly nine as he walked up the lane. He saw, as he came along, that a square of light proceeded from the open door of his cottage. It surprised him. It was weeks since Pansy had taken this method of showing that she was watching for his return. But when he saw Pansy herself leaning over the garden gate, he was more surprised still.

"I was beginnen' to be feared you was not comen' back," Pansy began.

"What would that matter to you if I had stopped away?" he asked.

"How can you be that silly?" she replied.

He looked at her doubtfully.

She lifted her face to be kissed.

"It's weeks since you done that," breathed Heffer.

She put her arm through his, pressed up against him.

"Kiss me again to make up for lost time," she said.

He took her close, held her.

"Pansy," protested Heffer, when at length he could speak, "when you ha' got a man as you ha' got me, you oughter do fair by him."

"Fair," whispered Pansy. "I want to do more than fair by you."

"I haven't stopped you," he answered. "You ha' done it all yourself."

"Have you never wanted to feel my arms round you?" she asked.

"Have you ever been for wanten' to put them round me?"

"They've been empty as empty."

"Pansy," said Heffer, "you can't be first hot and then cold with I. I couldn't stand it no longer. It was you what shut the door in me face. Now you fare to want I again. It's got to be one way or the other from now. Which way is it to be?"

"You don't want me to tell you, do you?" she asked.

"Ah!" exulted Heffer. "Didn't I say to meself 'Give her time enough, and she'll get over her temper'?"

"Come indoors, then," said Pansy.

Inside the little room a lamp was burning, there was a meal on the table, a flower in the vase Heffer had bought on the eve of his wedding day.

Then the stillness struck him. He looked over his shoulder. A chair was pushed into the corner where latterly the cradle had stood.

"You've taken baby upstairs in good time," he began.

"Heffer," answered Pansy. "Didn't you say by the gate there was nothen' or no one like me to you?"

"No more there ain't," he said, "but——"

"Heffer," interrupted Pansy. "I've told you all along it had to be your baby or me."

"Where is the child?" he cried out.

"Have you forgotten you said I came first?"

"What have you done with the child?" he demanded.

"If you cared for me all you say, you'd want nothen' or no one between us."

"My God, girl!" called out Heffer. "Is my baby here or isn't she?"

THAT PANSY SMITH

"The lady who answered the advertisement happened to come down this mornen'," said Pansy.

"You didn't tell her, I suppose, I'd be out of the way at Toosey market?"

"She came in a motor, dressed ever so grand."

"You've told the lady—you've dared to tell her she can have my child?"

"There you go!" answered Pansy. "Just like you! There's never no satisfyen' you—and me been that pertickler. I've not sent your child to the first old woman in the village who'd have her. I've found her a good home—with a real lady. Look! This is where she live," and Pansy brought a sheet of notepaper, printed with an address, out of the same drawer from which she had taken her original advertisement four months before.

Heffer made a movement to crush the sheet, refrained. Instead he folded it carefully, put it in his pocket.

"There's to be a nurse kept," Pansy told him. "And she'll have a clean frock every day, your baby will, each one of 'em starched beautiful, and a blue sash, and I shouldn't wonder if there ain't a rosette on every shoe she have on her feet."

Heffer turned slowly to confront his wife.

"You're to send your name on that piece of paper to make it right with the law," Pansy told him.

"To make what right?" he asked—but he knew.

"That the lady have adopted her."

Face to face stood Pansy and Heffer.

"I'm to send word on that bit of paper," and he tapped his waistcoat pocket, "that I'll sign my child away?" he asked.

Pansy nodded, but she looked at him uneasily.

Heffer put out his hand, fumbled sideways, until he felt the

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glass of beer standing ready for him on the table. He raised it, poised it before him; then he flung the liquid into Pansy's face.

* * *

The Frosts, father and son, had always been temperate folks. That night Heffer did not leave the "Red Lion" until closing time. He was not drunk, but he had tried to drown his misery in beer.

The cottage door opened as soon as he tried it, the lamp was still alight, behind it sat Pansy, as he liked to see her, with her sewing.

She rose as he entered.

"You behaved abominable to me," she began.

He saw the tear-stains on her face—and was silent.

"Some women would never overlook what you did," Pansy went on. "You messed up my dress, so I've had to sit with me arms bare 'til it dries."

She extended her arms, and he saw the white gleam of them—and backed away.

Pansy came after him.

"I shan't ever cast up your unreasonableness agin' you, Heffer," she said softly.

"Pansy," said Heffer, and he braced his back against the chimney-piece. "I've told you times and agin' that I were that soft about yer, I hadn't the strength of a mouse when it come to my say agin' your say. You knew it, and you've treated me just anyhow. But you forgot even fools can be pressed over far. That's what you ha' done this day. I may be husband to you, but I'm father to my child."

She looked him in the face and began to laugh.

He threw out his arms, indicated the stairs. "Get up those steps," he said. "Get up there this minute, as fast as you can, afore I tell you, Pansy Frost, that I hate you!"

THAT PANSY SMITH

Pansy went across the little room, lighted her candle. With it raised to cast its gleam on her face, she looked at him.

"Heffer Frost," she said. "You'll always come to heel as often as it please me to call you."

* * *

Heffer Frost took the train for London. He found his way to the address in Hampstead. He asked to see the lady of the house, and when she came to him, told her that the baby had been made over to her without his consent, and that he purposed to take his little daughter back with him.

"Come and see her," said the white-haired woman.

She took him into the garden. In a perambulator, with a warm rug over her—Heffer especially marked that detail—was the baby.

"I don't want to wake her," said the woman. "Sit down. She's so pretty while she sleeps. Your baby is happy with me," she told Heffer.

"She be child to I," he answered.

"Your wife doesn't want her."

"You're right," admitted Heffer reluctantly.

"If you take her back, will your wife treat her well?"

"If she don't, she'll have I to reckon with!"

"Can any man make a woman bestow love on another woman's child?"

"She be child to I," maintained Heffer Frost.

"You are away all day."

"I can't help that."

"Can you guarantee that your child will not be neglected while you are away?"

"I've said it afore. I say it agin'. There'd be I to reckon with if she was."

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"Wouldn't that mean bitterness between your wife and yourself, and unhappiness for your child?"

Heffer put his elbows on his knees. He looked down at the grass between his feet.

"Do you love your child well enough to let her stay here, because you know that she will be happier with me than in your cottage?" the white-haired woman asked.

The big man with the shock of fair hair and the square jaw went on staring down at the green grass. Mary had come into his mind. Mary was filling his mind. He had banished her, not in forgetfulness, but in shame.

"'Haps," muttered Heffer, "Pansy would learn the child her wicked ways. 'Haps," he went on, "Pansy 'ud 'fect even Mary's child with her own badness."

"I'll sign," said Heffer Frost.

He brought the paper out of his pocket.

Heffer set off home. His anger was hot against Pansy. Yet, as he drew nearer the cottage, some of Pansy's empire over him reasserted itself. Into his mind would come the thought: What if he and Pansy should take up their lives together again?

The door was open. Had Pansy left it open for him?

He went in. There was no one in the living-room.

He called. There was no answer.

He went into the back'us. There was no one there.

He came back, took the steps two at a time. Upstairs—there was no one there.

He came down, and when he approached the table, he saw that there was a note under the plate on it.

He took up the sheet of paper. It was pink, scented.

"I'm tired of you," the letter began. "When you left me this morning and said you were going to fetch your baby back, I'd had enough of you. You didn't know it,

THAT PANSY SMITH

but Jack Hurrell have been at home for a week now. He have been to see me every day whilst you were out of the way. And the things he have give me. This paper I'm writing to you on, he left last time he dropped in. Don't it smell fine? He never got out of me what he wanted, not till to-day. But I won't be put aside for anyone, least of all for your first wife's baby. So when Jack come this morning I said I'd go with him, and we've left for that Australia.

“From her that will be called now

“MRS. JACK HURRELL.”

Mr. Mocatta

MR. MOCATTA looked at the daffodil and the daffodil looked back at Mr. Mocatta with the blank expression peculiar to daffodils.

"Now then," said Mr. Mocatta, smiling at it because for weeks he had had nobody to try his smile on, "tell me this. Vos you British? Because I am telling you, if you vosn't, then you petter look out."

A little spring breeze blew over the Park. The daffodil shook its head slowly backwards and forwards.

"Ah . . . Vot I thought, exactly," said Mr. Mocatta. "Likely as not, there you vos, a little Dutchman, didn't it? Vell, vell, I tell you . . . Petter look out. . . ."

Mr. Mocatta was quite well dressed still, but there were signs that he would not be for much longer. His boots were getting down-at-heel, his cuffs were fraying. He wore the clothes in which he had left Germany—and much had happened since he left Germany, when the New Brooms began to sweep clean, and the Jews fled in front of them.

Mr. Mocatta sighed gently, and folded his hands patiently on his front where the waistcoat was getting so much too large. It hardly hurt him now to remember those dreadful

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months. He had been so chastened, so tried since, that he looked back on it all as he might look back on some peculiarly unpleasant strip of film about the sufferings of someone else.

It was difficult, now, to connect himself in any way with the prosperous little Jew who had got on so well, had been so happy, in Berlin. He had started as a young man with a small market garden. He did not know why gardening so attracted him, but it always had. He had worked up a very flourishing business. He had had acres of hot-houses, and a chain of little shops. He had a motor-car, and a house in the Oppenheimer Strasse, kept so beautiful by Mülle—dear, stout, comfortable Mülle! He had loved her so much. Once it had been a terrible grief to him that they had no children, but now, how glad he was! . . . Jehovah, who leads His people, albeit sometimes by tortuous paths—knows best, thought Mr. Mocatta, and he cracked his knuckles.

It was difficult to keep the law and observe the ritual under his present circumstances, but he did what he could. He lit the Sabbath candles religiously—there were two ends of them carefully preserved in his shabby suit-case. He did, as far as possible, all the washings and the sprinklings, and carried with him bitter herbs, and never failed to turn, when he prayed, towards Jerusalem.

Somewhere behind all his restless wanderings and miseries, he never doubted there lay the Promised Land. Even though he was a long time finding it, even though he had now to look for it all alone. . . . For Mülle had been unable to bear the load of misfortune that fell on them all of a sudden, the breaking up of their shops, the smashing of their glass-houses, the shame, the shoutings. . . . She died. To Mr. Mocatta it often seemed a very astute move on Mülle's part.

Gusts of emotion sweeping the Fatherland had blown Mr.

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Mocatta out of it with nothing but one small suit-case. He tried Paris.

They didn't like Jews in Paris. Nobody would employ him, and little by little his money trickled away. The only chance he got was from a firm who wanted him to sell, secretly, postcards of a very abandoned nature about the boulevards, at a commission of ten per cent.

Mr. Mocatta declined the offer, whereat the bearded gentleman at the desk said some insulting things about Mr. Mocatta's origin and race generally, and the interview ended.

Everywhere else "France for the French" was the local battle-cry, and Mr. Mocatta found himself shown the door, sometimes kindly, sometimes merely quickly.

He came to England. He had heard England was different. They didn't mind Jews, and they thought a lot about gardens in England. More and more earnestly did Mr. Mocatta hanker to get back on to the land, to dig, to sow and, in time, to garner. He did not want to be rich any more, or to succeed. He wanted to live quietly and grow things, in autumn to sweep fallen leaves into heaps and fire them. That was all.

England seemed to be the place. America only opened her arms to you for a certain time, on condition you had some money, and promised, on a gentleman's agreement, not to stay too long. England left her front gate ajar, and asked no questions. . . .

Mr. Mocatta arrived, full of hope.

He remained, because he had no money with which to get away.

One by one he pawned his few belongings—his watch, Mülle's bracelets. . . . Also his overcoat. Surely by next winter he would be able to buy himself another, and what was the use of carrying it round all the summer-time? At the thought of another winter, Mr. Mocatta was always aware of a cold and heavy despair in the pit of his stomach.

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He was down to his last five shillings, and it struck him that London was too extravagant an abode for a man down to his last five shillings. It was time to go, though he didn't know where he was going. He came into the Park to have a last look at the daffodils, because he had been taking a professional interest in their progress. A policewoman who had noted him doing so misinterpreted his intentions, and thought he was watching the windows of the houses in Park Lane, preparatory to committing a felony.

Mr. Mocatta had exhausted all the possibilities of a job in London. He had applied for every sort and kind of thing. Always they said,

"Are you British? Only British labour employed."

Sometimes they didn't even ask. They took one look and pushed him out. At the last place he applied he had made a sad error.

"I vork for very leetle money," said Mr. Mocatta . . .

"I work for no money—just for my food and bed."

In England, it seemed, a desire to work for little or no money showed a mean and vicious nature at its worst. Men behind him in the queue were rough with Mr. Mocatta. They damaged his hat.

So now he was leaving London, and he had come to say good-bye to the daffodils, who had been all the friends he had had in that great city. He used to grow daffodils . . . and iris, and narcissus, great staring beds of them. . . . He remembered the sweet excitement of waiting for a new species to open and declare its secret. . . . He remembered going home at nightfall, a young man, tired, with lots of mud on his boots. . . . Good days they were. He wished he had known at the time how good. One was always so anxious to get on, to get on . . .

He thought of the garden in the Oppenheimer Strasse, and

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wondered, without rancour, who was enjoying all the bulbs he had put in there, in the little lawn. He wondered whether the tulips had come up nicely on Mülle's grave. . . . At the thought Mr. Mocatta shook his head suddenly, and shed a tear.

He dried it quickly, because a policeman had his eye on him. He stood, stout and awe-inspiring, on the pavement opposite. He approached, one arm behind him, the toes of his large feet turned out. . . . Perhaps it was forbidden to cry in the public park. Perhaps it was for British Only those seats were there. Mr. Mocatta arose guiltily, and picked up his suit-case, meditating flight, but the policeman was upon him.

"What you got in there?" he demanded, indicating Mr. Mocatta's bag.

Mr. Mocatta put it on the seat, and obediently opened it. There were the Sabbath candles, burnt very low, neatly wrapped in paper. There was a small piece of unleavened bread over from the Passover which Mr. Mocatta had religiously kept, there was a small bundle of bitter herbs, besides Mr. Mocatta's few personal belongings. The policeman smiled and let him go, resuming his walk. Not the man he wanted, but you could never be sure, with these foreign blokes. . . .

Mr. Mocatta hurried away, anxious to avoid the eyes of the curious crowd that had collected. Before he went he nodded to the daffodils, and said, softly,

"Good-pye, my dears. . . ."

They were the only friends he had.

Mr. Mocatta walked down the Edgware road. The weather was so warm it constrained him to get rid of his waistcoat in one of the small shops on the left-hand side going down. One and sixpence better off; he felt rich and boarded the bus.

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"Vere to you go?" asked Mr. Mocatta politely.

The conductor grinned. He said Cricklewood. He said it twice, very loud.

"Go for twopence? Yes?" asked Mr. Mocatta.

The conductor took the pennies with a condescending air, and said nothing. Down in the body of the bus a stout woman with a string bag said to her friend with a basket, "Place stiff with foreigners these days, ain't it! Taking the bread out of honest British mouths."

Mr. Mocatta felt singularly unashamed. No British mouth would miss the amount of bread he had taken from it recently.

London appeared to stop when the bus did, since Mr. Mocatta got more than his real ride, on account of the conductor forgetting all about him. The country lay just beyond a clutter of little pink houses, between which broad asphalt roads ran out towards fields and trees. Presently ducks on a pond quacked at Mr. Mocatta. . . .

"Now then," he asked them. . . . "Vos you British? Because if you vosn't, you may soon be sorry . . . I tell you."

Ahead in the spring sunshine lay hills, and quiet villages nestling amongst them, church spires pointing to the sky. Mr. Mocatta trudged along, pondering many things, and wondering not a little why it was if you asked for no money, or only a very little, in England they thought nothing of you—they spoilt your hat.

Footsore, he was aware of an unpleasant sensation around the heels that told him his boots were going. This was a disastrous affair. He turned abruptly to the right, for no better reason than that there was grass growing at the roadside. His suit-case began to feel too heavy for him. He sat down in the sunshine to rest, and unpacked and ate his last piece of unleavened bread.

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He had no idea where he was, nor did it seem to matter. If there is a Providence that shapes our ends, it worked on Mr. Mocatta's entirely single-handed. There was a white sign-post at the end of the road, with two arms. One said "To Elstree," the other "To The North."

They were all one to Mr. Mocatta. He had only taken the road to the right because of the grass at the edge of it, which is kind to tired feet.

He looked at the sky. Since pawning his watch he had become very clever at telling the time by the sky, and he guessed it was getting on for four. Once on a time he would have been driving back in his own car through the cheerful noises of the Berlin streets, to his tea. And what a tea! Everything of the best; yet Mülle had been so economical a housekeeper. What would she say if she could see him now, his trousers too large in front, his boots broken. Oh, Mülle, be sorry for your boy!

Yes, he thought. It was astute of Mülle to die, since Death alone does not ask, to-day, was you German, French, British?

With the abruptness of springtime, the sun went in. Over the fields the clouds gathered ominously. If there was one thing he couldn't afford to do, it was risk a wetting.

"Now then, I petter hurry myself up to get someveres, don't I?" said Mr. Mocatta.

He went along as fast as he could in his broken boots, dragging his suit-case with him. As he reached the village street, the first drops began to fall.

Mr. Mocatta had never been diffident about knocking at a door before, because he had always been able to pay his way. But now he could not pay his way any longer, and since what he had to ask for amounted to charity, he couldn't do it. He hesitated, then went on. Over the green, beside

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a pair of ancient stocks and another duck-pond, stood the church.

Mr. Mocatta decided to shelter there until the shower passed. He went inside, leaving his suit-case in the porch. The rain was falling heavily now. It bounced like little silver balls on the flagged path.

Inside the church it was dusk and pleasant. Light filtered through the coloured glass of the windows and showed him, when his eyes grew accustomed to the dusk there, a profusion of flowers. White lilies decorated the altar—Easter lilies arranged in tall vases. There were primroses in tight little bunches along the window-ledges, and more primroses on the choir stalls, because it was Easter time. All the afternoon the church decorators had been busy, but now they had gone home for tea.

It was warm and pleasant and very quiet, and the air had a sweet smell. Mr. Mocatta sat down in a back pew and gazed up at the rood cross. A robin had come in with him. It perched on the top of it, and sang a short and happy song. . . .

Mr. Mocatta nodded and nodded. Into his dream the bird's song wove itself, but now it was not singing in a village church: it was singing in a garden on the side of a mountain. The ground there was stony and unproductive, and, somewhat to his own surprise, Mr. Mocatta found himself busy there, with a broom. He was sweeping diligently, and he paused in his work to look at the lilies, and knew he was very proud of, and very interested in those lilies, because he had planted them himself.

It was a poor sort of garden, otherwise. The soil was not rich and soft like the soil of his gardens near Berlin. It was a marvel you got anything at all to grow in such a stony and barren place, but in spite of that, looking round, Mr. Mocatta

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had reason to be proud of his garden, and felt a thrill of triumph at the opening of the lilies.

There was a small boy who evidently assisted him, and now Mr. Mocatta knew for certain he was nowhere near Berlin, because the boy wore no clothes to speak of, a thing they would never have allowed in Berlin—nor England either, for that matter. Mr. Mocatta had wandered through so many countries and so many places in his time, that he was not particularly surprised to find himself in this one. Indeed, he felt oddly at home and settled, as he bent over his broom. . . .

Suddenly, through the garden, a woman came running. She was crying bitterly. It distressed Mr. Mocatta to see her crying, for he was ever the kindest of men. He laid down his broom and hurried after her. A flock of small birds flew down and began to peck hopefully around where Mr. Mocatta had been sweeping. . . .

He found the woman beside a cave. The cave had been sealed up, but someone had broken the seals and the stone was rolled away. Beside the door a second woman sat, her face in her hands. . . .

Mr. Mocatta peeped into the cave. There were linen clothes lying within, folded. Otherwise the cave was empty. He remembered vaguely there had been a burying, and a deal of talk about it, but he had not paid much attention to the matter. He was a gardener, it did not come into his province; and as for all the talk and tittle-tattle of the town, he cared for none of these things.

Still, he was immensely sorry for the woman. He patted her on the shoulder, and gave her what comfort he could, and led her back to his hut, and gave her a cup of water. He knew her for a woman of the town, and no better than she should be; but he was only a gardener, not one to give him-

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self airs, and his heart was very kind. He picked one of his best lilies for her, and gave it her to take away. Women, he thought, get so upset when anyone dies, yet die we all must, in our time. . . .

The dream broke and faded, the singing of the bird came nearer until it was the robin again, singing on the cross, and there he was, alone in the back pew of a village church, the scent in his nostrils from the Easter decorations on the altar.

Mr. Mocatta sat up and rubbed his eyes. He remembered where he was, and groaned, his head on his hand. Then he got up, and stumbled out, bitterly aware of his broken boots on the marble flooring. . . .

In the church porch a stout woman girt about the middle with a blue cotton apron stood, her arms akimbo, looking at his suit-case. . . .

"It vos mine," said Mr. Mocatta apologetically. . . .
"I take it away now, didn't I. . . . Good-evening."

He looked so worn, so tired, that Mrs. Marshbanks, though, as she said afterwards, never a one for foreigners, felt sorry for him. She had come to lock up for her husband, laid low again with lumbago. She said,

"There now. . . . I never saw you, neither. Another moment and I'd have locked you in, if it hadn't been for this."

Mr. Mocatta could think of several worse fates than being locked in a nice warm church all night, so he smiled a sickly smile at her, and that smile, also, had a strange affect on Mrs. Marshbanks. . . . Almost, as you might say, as if in some odd manner she was responsible for Mr. Mocatta. . . .

"Come a long way, 'ave you?"

"From London I vos come. . . ."

"Well, I never. . . . And just look at your boots, too. . . ."

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He eyed them regretfully, and sighed, "I vosn't have any more, did I. . . ."

"Out of work, I'll be bound. It's crool, I know. I've had a brother took that way chronic for years. . . . Come along with me and have a bite of tea, foreigner or no foreigner. . . ." She ran a practised eye over him.

"Jew, aren't you?"

Mr. Mocatta said sadly that he was.

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Marshbanks, high-mindedly, "I haven't got nothing personal against the Jews. . . . A gardener, did you say? Well, I always seem to get on with gardeners. Marshbanks was one himself, up at the Hall, till his lumbago got too bad. . . ."

Over the kitchen fire he told her some of his story, diffidently enough, expecting to be shown the door at any moment. Mrs. Marshbanks was touched and enthralled.

"Just fancy. . . . As for that Hitler, I'd like to get hold of him and give him a piece of my mind. . . . Well, you can't go on in this weather, and that's certain. There's a bed in the shed out there, Marshbanks sometimes sleeps in when the weather's hot. . . . If you like to take that. . . ."

"But I can't pay you noddings. . . ."

"Oh, well, we shan't quarrel about that. Lots of us have to take things we can't pay for these days. . . . Now, being a Jew, I suppose you wouldn't fancy a bit of bacon; but what about a lightly boiled egg?"

Mr. Mocatta sat in a bemused state, at the inglenook. He was afraid he would wake a second time in a moment, and find himself once more in the darkening church. Or, worse still, somewhere at the roadside.

"My girl, Florrie, she works up at the Studios. . . . She was telling me the other day the gardener there was leaving.

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You never know your luck. She might be able to hear of something for you."

She removed his boots forcibly and sent them, in spite of his protests, out to be mended.

"Don't you worry. Perce Walpole is my brother-in-law, and we shan't quarrel about that."

"Strange," she said to her daughter, later, "the way I took to the little toad at sight, wasn't it? Almost as if him and me had known each other for years; and as a rule I'm not one for foreigners. But if you'd seen him, creeping out of the church . . . I declare, it gave me quite a turn. Looked as if he might drop dead any minute, he did."

Florrie Marshbanks worked on the sets. All she did was sweep them up, scrub the floors, and clean out the dressing-rooms when the stars—a mucky lot—had done with them. Her ambitions did not end there. She looked forward with the utmost confidence to the future, and felt one day her time would come.

She was a round-faced, sensible girl, with her hair worn long, after Greta Garbo, who was her guiding star. She stood with her arms on her hips, surveying Mr. Mocatta, who was sunk in his chair in a coma of exhaustion, his long nose almost touching his chest.

"Quite a type, isn't he?" said Florrie. . . . "I'll speak to Mr. Gaigern to-morrow. . . . Chippy has gone, and I know they're wanting someone on the gardens there. . . ."

"Do. . . . I'd like to do the little toad a good turn," said Mrs. Marshbanks, dispassionately peeling an onion. "I've got nothing personal against the Jews. Not reely."

Mr. Gaigern was a young man unnecessarily well up-holstered behind. He wore flashy clothes and had a loud laugh, and when in doubt fingered his tie like the Prince of Wales.

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"My dear girl, you know what a jam of folks I have always wanting to see me. . . ."

Mr. Gaigern was very high and mighty with the subordinates, but when any of his superiors were about he was very small beer.

"He doesn't want Crowd . . . or Extra, Mr. Gaigern. It's a gardener's job he's after, and you know you want someone, with Chippy leaving . . ."

"Send him along, send him along," said Mr. Gaigern. He had no power whatever in the matter of choosing a gardener, and he fancied they had already got one, but he liked to loom large before Florrie. . . . "You know I will do what I can for you," said Mr. Gaigern. "Better give him a note to me. You know how busy I always am."

He thought, "It won't matter seeing him, even if they have engaged their man. . . . I can always send him away after taking his name and address."

Mr. Mocatta duly presented himself with his note. His suit had been nicely brushed, his boots mended. He had no hope whatever, but he was touched by Mrs. Marshbanks' and Florrie's kindness. He dreamed, while he waited, idle dreams. If he did get a job, he would lodge with the Marshbanks, paying them largely for the use of the bed in the shed. He would buy Florrie a silk blouse, a string of pink pearls. . . . She was a good girl. . . .

The clock-hands crept round the clock once and started on a second journey. Mr. Mocatta waited still, his hands clasped patiently on his front where his trousers were now much too big.

Mr. Gaigern, who had long ago forgotten all about him, carried on a flirtation with the girl in the Kiosk downstairs. Mr. Mocatta fell into a light sleep, from which he was awakened to find himself the centre of a crowd. . . . There was a

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large man in tweeds, and a short man with a cigar. Mr. Mocatta's first thought was that he had been arrested for lurking with intent, and he got to his feet, staring about him with a frightened, furtive expression. . . . The four men laughed delightedly. They clapped one another on the back. They clapped Mr. Mocatta on the back. They said it was the very thing.

"Best bit of work Gaigern has ever done." Mr. Gaigern, returning refreshed from his amorous pursuits, was taken aback, was at sea. He laughed hoarsely, he fingered his tie, waiting to get his queue. . . . When it came, he took it heartily.

"Yes . . . As soon as I saw him," said Mr. Gaigern, who never had seen him. . . . "I thought he was just the man . . . just the man. . . ."

"Take him to Seligmann. . . . This will cheer him up. . . . What a face! . . . What a priceless face! . . . Man, it's a gold-mine. . . ."

Mr. Mocatta went where he was bidden. He still had little idea what it was all about. He grasped his shabby hat, his broken suit-case. He fancied now they were going to offer him a job of some sort, but no doubt, as soon as they learned he wasn't British, it would all fall through, and he would be back on the world again. . . .

There was a soft thick carpet in the office. There were leather chairs. Photographs of women incredibly blonde, incredibly beautiful, incredibly naked, covered the walls. Behind the desk sat a dark young man with a profusion of thick dark hair that tried to curl.

When he saw Mr. Mocatta he laughed lightly and happily.

"Oh, splendid!" he said. "Oh, the very thing! Gaigern shall have promotion over this. . . . Get him on to the set at once. . . . It's exactly what we've been held up

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for all this time. Move Lobendeck on to something else, and put this fellow in his part. He doesn't have to act. He is the man. . . . Sign him on at six pounds a week. . . . That all right with you, six pounds a week. . . . To start?"

Mr. Mocatta reeled a little. He pointed to his own chest. He said, weakly, "Six pounds a week? Me?"

They laughed; they clapped one another on the back some more. How happy they were in that well-appointed office!

Mr. Mocatta thought, "Mrs. Marshbanks. . . . Florrie. . . ." All the things he could do for them whirled through his brain. Pink pearls. Silk blouses. Motor-car rides. . . .

He said unsteadily, "But—I vosn't British. . . ."

The young man lolled in his chair, delighted. Then he leaned towards Mr. Mocatta over his desk, his slim hands folded, the fingers pressed together.

"No more vos I, Emmaneul," he said.

LEO WEISENBERG

The Alarm-Clock

AT a busy crossing Andrei was held up by the traffic. Through the drifting snowflakes passed a stream of pedestrians, tramcars, motors and buses, and above the brilliant face of a large electric clock shone like the sun.

"I'll see if my watch is right," thought Andrei, and reached towards his breast-pocket. Instead of the shape to which his fingers were accustomed, they felt only emptiness. Andrei began to search through all his pockets, but the watch was nowhere to be found. What the devil! He remembered clearly that on leaving the house he had it with him; nevertheless, it was gone.

Andrei was aghast.

His father's gift, the watch had been his constant companion throughout his school and university life. It had served him—seventeen—thirty-two—for fifteen years the watch had served him. Could it possibly have gone beyond recall? Andrei could not believe it. It seemed to him that the watch was still ticking in his breast-pocket, close to his heart. In his imagination he felt it was still there, just as a cripple continues to feel an amputated limb. He even touched the pocket once more.

But the watch had vanished.

Andrei recalled its worn case, the wrinkled dial, yellow with age, and the black hands moving steadily round. Why, he could even hear its faint ticking. He thought of how sometimes it would stop, and then he would uncover the mechanism and blow off the dust, and his breath would revive the watch for a while and it would start again, limping, fitful. Suddenly, it seemed to Andrei as if it had been like an old man.

The snow still descended in large flakes, drifting over pedestrians, tramcars, and motors alike. Andrei kept thinking, "The watch, the watch," and his vexation grew. He decided to put off his visit to the publishing house where he had to deliver a manuscript. "The watch, the watch," thought Andrei as he paced the streets, glancing absently into the shop windows. Suddenly he became aware of the sign "Industrial Watch Co-operative," and below, tier upon tier of clocks, pocket-watches and wrist-watches. They stood, or they hung on glass rods, like birds, gazing into the street with their owl-like faces, some as if burning with the desire for freedom, others drowsy and disinterested. Above them all, at the cross-roads, reigned the huge dial with the red sign across it: "The right time."

"I must look around for a new watch," sighed Andrei, and entered the shop.

He sensed the silent aviary of watches spring to life. Mechanisms, confined in metal, wooden and glass cages, began to tick, to turn, to sing in a hundred different keys. Andrei heard the gruff voice of that staid companion—the dining-room clock, the coquettish ring of antique chimes and the rousing call of the alarm. He heard the croaking of crude workmen's watches and the chirping of ladies' golden wristlets.

"A symphony of time," he thought.

THE ALARM-CLOCK

There were stop-watches which decided the commonplace destiny of the race-course gambler and listened to the violent heart-beats of the backer. Here were efficient counters that recorded the revolutions of a machine, there the modest adornment of a homely hearth, or the ruthless judge of some defeated boxer lying in the bloodstained ring. Here were hustling neighbours and shrewd recorders of wind-velocity. There were witnesses of tender first meetings and bitter partings; servants of time and masters of human destiny in infinite variety to appraise the punctual and censor the sluggard.

So did the clocks and watches appear in Andrei's imagination.

He fell into a day-dream, standing in front of a cabinet full of antique watches. He began to examine their curious old-fashioned forms, their enamelled dials decorated with landscapes, arabesques, and flowers. He began to decipher the inscriptions and trade marks: Pourzet, Recordon, Ernchaux, Jacques Siuchet. It was a rich collection, and Andrei felt at home among them. He was especially attracted by a most curious watch. Approaching the glass to decipher the letters on the dial, he saw a diffused reflection of himself next to an unfamiliar face. Obviously, someone else had become interested.

"That is a Bregette," said Andrei, reading the label.

"Until the tireless Bregette would ring the dinner hour," replied his neighbour.

The quotation was so unexpected that Andrei turned round sharply to see before him a plain-looking girl, wearing a simple grey coat and crimson beret, and holding a small valise in her hand. The girl smiled as though awaiting an answer. Andrei, however, was in no mood for joking. He again recalled his loss.

"Why do you speak of things which you don't under-

stand?" he said sharply and, noticing the look of astonishment on the girl's face, "Yes, don't understand!" he repeated.

But the look of astonishment remained.

"Well, tell me," said Andrei. "What does the word 'Bregette' in your glib quotation mean?"

Her answering smile radiated self-assurance.

"A Bregette," she said, "is an old watch or chronometer, named after its designer, a Parisian watchmaker and mechanic, Abraham-Louis Bregette, who lived at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries."

The answer was quite exhaustive. Andrei was astonished. He wanted to ask, "How do you know?" but instead said drily, "Yes. But still incorrect. In a sense, absolutely wrong. You, evidently, think that in this phrase Pushkin meant to convey that Onegin made merry until the Bregette—in other words, the watch—should strike the dinner hour, that is it would remind him of dinner. Am I right?"

"Perfectly," answered the girl.

"Nonsense!" said Andrei, "nonsense! Pushkin was incomparably more subtle than you are, my dear young lady. 'Bregette' in this phrase does not mean a watch at all, nor any kind of clock; but simply—strange as this may appear to you—the stomach."

"The stomach!" Her mouth opened in astonishment.

"Yes, indeed—the stomach," said Andrei significantly. "Pushkin says so himself, somewhere else—do you remember?—'The stomach is our most exact Bregette.' Am I right? The meaning of our phrase becomes clear. The poet intended a witticism. He said, 'Until the never-sleeping stomach'—yes, stomach, of course, not watch—'should call Onegin to dinner.' In ordinary language, until the stomach should begin to rumble. The watch in this case is allegorical—as everything else, by the way, is allegorical

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in the great poet's works. Is that clear to you, my dear girl?"

"How interesting!" she said softly.

"As you see," said Andrei, "the stomach and time are quite closely inter-related."

"That *is* interesting!" she repeated, and they turned to the door.

* * *

They had dinner together—her name was Anna—and then went to the cinema, and later on for a walk. The snow kept falling, and their faces became wet, but they were quite warm.

"Let us go up to my room," said Andrei.

But Anna answered, "It is late, it is almost twelve o'clock."

Andrei pleaded with her, so they went in. Andrei switched on the electric kettle, spread a cloth, put some biscuits on the table and started a fire in the stove. Anna admired the room, but Andrei had never thought much of it. The tea was hot, the fire in the stove burned brightly. They told each other many things about themselves and felt very cosy. Anna was twenty-two years old, the daughter of a political exile under the Czar. She was born in Siberia on the wide river Yenissei, which rushes through the ravines of the Sayansk Mountains before it reaches the valleys. Her whole childhood was spent there, but now she had lived in the City for years. She was a student and laboratory worker in the watch department of the institute of exact mechanics. In the watch department. . . . So that was why she knew so much about that Bregette! She lived with her sister, a good way off, on Vassilievsky Island. While Anna told of her work in the laboratory, time flew by. They felt very warm. They became silent, and then suddenly the clock in the next room struck three.

Anna sprang up. Could it really be three o'clock? Yes,

it was three o'clock in the morning, but the snow was still falling in the street.

"I must be at work by nine o'clock," said Anna. "How shall I get home?"

"Stay here," suggested Andrei. "I will fix up a bed on the couch for you."

"I am afraid I'll over-sleep myself," said she. "At home my sister wakes me. I mustn't over-sleep."

Her face grew serious, like that of a studious schoolgirl concentrating upon a problem. Her expression suddenly changed, as though the problem were solved. It became gay and joyous.

"I have an idea," it seemed to say. Anna bent over to her valise, and opened it. Andrei watched her while she pulled out a box, tied with cord.

"What are you doing?" demanded Andrei, perplexed.

Anna untied the cord and opened the box. She pulled out an alarm-clock, and holding it carefully, lovingly, like an infant from its cradle, put it on the palm of her hand. It was still silent and lifeless.

"I must be at work by nine," said Anna. "About twenty minutes for dressing and half an hour for travelling. I'll set the alarm for eight."

She wound the clock with skilful, decisive fingers. The clock became alive. It began to tick. Anna put it to her ear. It had a strong heart. Then she moved the red alarm-hand to the figure eight, wound the alarm, and turned the time-hand round to eight, so that both coincided. A sound was born and came forth; it cried loud and joyously, as if pleading and at the same time giving an order. It startled Andrei, and he laughed at its violence. The clock stamped its feet. It jumped in Anna's hands, like a lively infant. Tremendous forces, resilient and impetuous, beat within it.

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"With such a clock one cannot over-sleep," said the proud Anna.

Andrei prepared Anna's bed on the couch. She undressed quickly and fell asleep while he lay in bed, reading as usual. He found himself in the thick of a noisy, obstinate dispute.

This dispute, on the nature of time, went on and on in the pages of his book, a battle indeed. The warriors were the philosophers of many ages and schools of thought. Time. . . . Some of them, in their simple childishness, saw it as "the sphere of worlds," others christened it "the life of the soul," and dipped it in the dark fount of Christianity; others confined it in the brain of man, as in a prison, proclaiming it "a manner of thought," or "a window for the study of nature." Some saw in it a symbol of illusion, others the proof of the existence of all matter. Time. . . . What a battle raged in the lines and pages of this book! How the grey-beards of the learned wagged in frenzy!

The alarm-clock kept on ticking and ticking as the hands crept round the dial.

Andrei closed the book and looked at the couch. Anna slept. He could hear her breathing, and for a time was entranced by her waves of fair hair. He turned off the light, and in the darkness heard the beat of the alarm-clock and saw its luminous hands brightly shining.

At length it seemed to him that it was his own heart beating and his eyes which shone so brightly. In the darkness, Andrei could almost feel the cool metal of the alarm-clock. Gradually the ticking ceased, the gleam of the hands faded and the iron form of the alarm-clock disappeared, like water between the fingers. Or, perhaps, Andrei's heart had calmed down and his eyes closed and his body become restful? Who can fathom those mysteries? Like water between the fingers. He was asleep.

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A terrible sound burst upon Andrei in his sleep, like the clang of a distant tramcar, like the gong of a fire-engine, like the tocsin, strident and compelling.

It wrenched open his drowsy eyelids, it pulled off his blanket. It forced him to sit up and see the alarm-clock pointing to eight o'clock. As before, the clock stamped its feet like a lively infant. As on the previous night, it leaped up and down on the table like a noisy child, full of energy. It had acquired tremendous new strength, elastic and impetuous. Now, it seemed to move, going towards Andrei, pushing him roughly.

Andrei longed to sleep.

"Devil take it!" thought he. He glanced at the couch, and saw Anna's mass of lovely hair. The alarm-clock kept ringing incessantly and violently, as though asking and commanding. "Devil take it!" thought Andrei.

"Turn round," said Anna's voice through the ringing.

He heard her dressing, quickly and methodically. He heard her remove the bedding from the couch. He still lay in bed, his face to the wall, and gave directions. A clean towel was in the closet, soap in the bathroom, in a white saucer on the shelf. Bread and butter were in the window. Then Anna went to wash, and the water from the tap came clear and fresh, like spring water. But he still lay in bed. Anna returned, her face glowing.

"I'll open the window," she said. "May I?"

"Certainly," he answered with resignation. He dreaded the cold air, and pulled the blanket up to his very nose.

He gave her more directions, where to get a knife, a glass and plates—petty household directions. He gave orders, lying in bed, and the morning air poured in through the window. Anna drank her tea, cleared the table, washed

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the dishes and prepared his breakfast. She did all this differently and more rapidly than he could ever do.

"How handy she is!" he thought—"an accurate machine."

"It is twenty past eight," said Anna; "in five minutes I shall be gone."

Andrei glanced at the alarm-clock. "It is so early," he thought, "so early." He did not want her to go.

"It is so early," he said.

But she did not understand.

"There is plenty of time," she replied. "I'll get there on time."

She put on her coat and red beret, and became like the girl in the watchmaker's shop the night before. Andrei thought of their meeting, and again he did not want her to go, but felt that he was powerless to hold her.

"Anna," said he, "come back to-night."

"I'll ring up," she answered, and, waving her hand, was gone.

"Be sure you do," Andrei called after her.

His voice from the crumpled bed sounded indistinct and hollow. Andrei remained alone in the silence of the room. Yet he felt the presence of a stranger. His heart beat faster. Suddenly he was conscious of a ticking sound, the alarm-clock. Anna had forgotten it. Andrei glanced towards it.

It showed half-past eight. "So early," he thought.

The alarm-clock frowned at him. Its gladness of the night before had disappeared. It looked sternly disapproving and seemed angry.

"Devil take it!" thought Andrei, and, turning over, he fell asleep.

And again he slept, a deep sleep. . . .

Andrei awoke at one o'clock in the afternoon.

Usually Andrei would get up very late—at one or even

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two o'clock in the afternoon. He would dress, without haste, and leisurely eat his breakfast while reading or looking through his bookshelves. It was usually three o'clock before he sat down to work. But he did not work for long. Either he would have to go out, or ideas simply would not come to him, or it would be time for dinner. He would go out, and return late at night and get to work. Late rising had become habitual, but at the same time he found many justifications. His work kept him up so late that he rarely fell asleep before three o'clock. True, his work was not always an excuse, but the habit of late rising became rooted.

In the evening Anna rang up from the laboratory and promised to come. They sat talking till late, and she came again on the third and fourth days and stayed the night. Finally, she settled in his room as his wife and they lived together. She brought with her a different atmosphere. She was cheerful, but brisk and dominating. Their lives were so different. This side of her nature appeared at first in everything that she did.

Andrei took a dislike to the alarm-clock immediately, and with each passing day it became more and more unbearable. Its clamour sharply roused him each morning. This fat, iron creature tore his beloved Anna from his embraces, disrobed her with the roughness of a gaoler, and smothered the cries of its victim as she submitted to the ordeal by cold water. It forced Anna into the wet street, hurried her into a tram, and so to work. She became once more absorbed in the service of time, poring over watches and chronometers until the evening. It seemed to Andrei that Anna was too willing a slave to the imperious decrees of the alarm-clock.

In him it inspired feelings of rage, even jealousy.

Mingled with his tenderness and gratitude to Anna were

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the feelings of a stern and exacting master. Bitterly he resented her daily absence.

Once they quarrelled, and Andrei reproached Anna for being heartless, for loving her chronometers more than her husband. There was no sense in their living together, he said. Anna gathered up her things and went back to her old room. Andrei was greatly distressed. It was all caused by the hateful alarm-clock. Andrei loathed the clock. He waited patiently, hoping that she would return in the evening, but she did not come, and at last he fell asleep.

He slept as if he was drugged, heavily. . . . And yet a part of Andrei's brain seemed to be alert, to watch, to listen for some expected sound. It was uncanny, this half-felt premonition. It was hostile, this expected sound, and yet eagerly awaited. It seemed to Andrei's sub-consciousness that the silence would burst like a dam and the clatter of the alarm-clock would submerge him. It would be a relief to hear it once more. Nevertheless, his sleep was sound, and there was silence.

There was silence for two mornings, and then ten fresh, frosty mornings passed peacefully by, and finally a month. The memory of Anna began to grow faint. As for the alarm-clock, he even thought of it with affection, reminiscent perhaps of his fondness for the vanished watch. Life began to flow in the usual channels, and he slept soundly as he had formerly slept.

One evening Andrei met Anna in the theatre, alone. They met face to face in the narrow passage. Andrei became confused and sought to turn away, but it was impossible to avoid a meeting. They walked on together, met again during the intervals, and were soon telling the news since their parting, as though they had never quarrelled. They decided to live together once more and never to part. As on that

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first evening, Andrei said: "Let us go up to my room," and Anna answered, "It is late, it is almost twelve o'clock," Andrei pleaded, "Well, just for a little while." Anna promised to return the next day. She came and brought her things, among them the fat, iron creature, just as before, and they sat up talking. Once more Anna wound the alarm-clock. They fell asleep very late.

The ringing of the alarm-clock tore Andrei out of a deep sleep.

Andrei was puzzled. The sound was different. A new sound. As though long expected, and now released. A new sound. It was joyous and free. It was welcome, as the rustling of a green branch above a desert spring to the weary traveller. Like a shepherd's pipe at dawn, like a hunter's horn, like a trumpeter, triumphant, it sang of comradeship and love.

Andrei's eyes opened.

He beheld Anna already refreshed by the cold morning wash, and with new gladness recalled their happy meeting. Ashamed, he began to dress, quickly, hurriedly. He splashed water over the bathroom and brushed his teeth vigorously. He rubbed his body till it glowed. He seemed to be taking part in a race. He rushed in just as Anna, humming a tune, was sitting down at the table. She poured out his tea and sliced the bread. Andrei, sitting beside her, a proud equal in the contest, thought how delicious the tea was and how fresh the air that poured in through the window.

"Why are you up so early this morning?" asked Anna.

"I couldn't sleep," answered Andrei. "I have work to do."

Before leaving, Anna put her arms around him. He went with her to the door, watched her descend and heard the outer door bang below. He was alone, alone. But there

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was no solitude now, there was no loneliness. Neither was there the previous empty silence. He sat down at the table and began writing. Nothing remained of his previous awkwardness and uncertainty. He even began to hum a tune, a new one like the song Anna had sung, and the alarm-clock kept time with him. Andrei could sense its mechanism at work. The alarm-clock gaily ticking away the minutes.

Andrei rose early each day. It was the alarm-clock that awakened him, and from early morning sang a song of comradeship between the three of them. Before, it had seemed a stranger; then, it had been an enemy that would part them. Now both Andrei and Anna opened their eyes at its first clarion call. They got so used to rising when it called that they did not always need waking. Sometimes they even got up before the hour. Sometimes Andrei, sometimes Anna, would wake first. In this early rising there was an eagerness, a kind of unexpressed competition, as to who should be first. In bed one evening Anna said :—

“I have to be at work half an hour earlier to-morrow.”

“Shock-worker !” said Andrei, drowsily.

But Anna beat the clock, waking up a full half-hour earlier, as she had wished. From force of habit Andrei got up too, although he would have welcomed a little more sleep. When the time came for Anna to go, Andrei watched her get ready. She put on a new spring coat and hat, and arranged her lovely fair hair. He watched her closely, and she came over to him and, as always before leaving, put her arm around him with a gentle touch, like that of wings.

Emotion surged within him. Tenderness and a fond jealousy filled his heart, filling it to overflowing. He could not bear to let Anna go. Where and why must she go ? He was being deprived of his Anna chosen by him, cared for by him : as though someone were tearing away a part of

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himself, an arm or a leg. This same proprietary fondness filled Andrei's simple but self-seeking heart.

They stood thus for a long time in silence. Only their hearts beat, till it seemed that the beats changed to a different note, soft and far away, like the shepherd's pipe at dawn or the hunter's horn in the far distance, and then to the crowing of a cock or the sound of a syren. The sound became louder. It rang out like a trumpet, it beat like the drum of marching troops and pealed like a bell. Then it burst forth like a cannon shot.

At that, their hands unclasped.

It was a clear, spring morning. Sparkling air streamed into the room. Men and women were off to work. Boys and girls were schoolward bound. Anna marched gaily in step with them. There was new life and purpose within her, radiant, invincible. The great clock hung like the sun above the cross-roads, "Eight o'clock!" it seemed to shout; "Eight o'clock!" And the alarm-clock on Andrei's table, with its powerful beat, kept in step "Eight o'clock!" Andrei stood at the window and drank in the morning air. He threw the window open to the full and turned eagerly to his work.

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Entertaining the Islanders¹

The island of St. Birgitta, where the scene of this story is laid, and where the Governor, Mr. Julius Wack, David and Anita unconsciously are entertaining the islanders, appears in its most seductive colours in the following instalment, in which David's love for Anita, though it is unrecognizable by him as such, ripens in the hours they spend together.

David Banastre is the youthful head of an advertising firm in New York. Weary of the pressure of modern life, he has come wandering among the islands to find peace, to write a book, and to work out a philosophy of living that will enable him to endure life. Anita has fled from the city to St. Birgitta to escape from her husband, Gene Fulton, and from much the same social exactions that have made David weary.

They meet on the island under the benign patronage of Mr. Julius Wack, Anita's uncle and a wealthy retired manufacturer of floor polish. He is a cultured hedonist, whose philosophy of life, frequently and amusingly expressed gives to Entertaining the Islanders its attractive quality of sophistication.

[Earlier instalments have appeared in our June and July numbers.]

. . . **D**AVID saw Anita, half a dozen times a week; in the late afternoons at "Adventure," or at an occasional dinner party, for he began to meet some St. Birgittans, or when he

¹ *Entertaining the Islanders*, by Struthers Burt. Lovat Dickson, 8s. 6d. net.

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went swimming with her and Anita, Second, and Molly, the nurse. At these dinner parties he would often catch Anita's eyes, and they would smile at each other in understanding. When they went swimming, Anita would stop for him in her car and as a rule take him to the little beach, Diabelar. Afternoons at Diabelar were filled with the trade wind and the cool feeling of wet salt on cheek and eyelid, and with laughter, and with long silences as David and Anita lay on the sand watching Anita, Second, and Molly, as they walked or dug or waded.

David was interested, puzzled and, at times, amused by his relationship with Anita. He saw it developing into something beyond the range of his recent experiences; into something that had not happened to him since his youth.

Anita, Second, dug in the sand with a tiny spade and packed tight a red tin bucket; then she walked ten feet and with intense gravity dumped her load upon a wall she was building. She squatted, patted the wall to her liking, and returned for another load.

On the edge of the sea grapes, Molly, sitting stooped over, her legs straight out in front of her, read a tabloid.

David, resting on his elbow, his chin cupped in his left palm, picking up sand and letting it run through the fingers of the other hand, looked at her and then at Anita.

"Is that all she ever reads?"

"Molly? Oh, no, she reads a lot of things. . . . *True Married Tales*, and *Love Nests*, and *Stories of Seduction*, and so on—I'm not sure if I have the names just right. She's alive to all the advantages of her new country."

Anita snuggled her head down upon her arm and closed her eyes. The long bronze lashes lay upon her finely modelled, warmly coloured cheeks, beginning now to be overlaid with the brown of sunburn. Her arm pushed one

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cheek up so that her mouth pouted childishly. David, still resting on his elbow, looked down at her. His eyes took in her entire length—the bright wave of her hair, her slim, quietly breathing torso, the spring of her legs below the hips, their whiteness powdered with the fine gold of hair the sun made visible, her small feet, the toes well apart, the nails healthy and well cared for.

“I knew a fellow once,” he said, “who owned and edited a string of those magazines—a charming, sensitive, highly educated fellow. He paid large sums for new names, and for nothing else. The names lasted about a year. For the rest, he copyrighted the names of all his contributors, poorly paid hacks who wrote under half a dozen different pseudonyms. There’d be, for instance, a ‘Lady Dolittle,’ who was also six other fictitious authors, and she’d come around and say, ‘Won’t you pay me a little more?’ and he’d say, ‘Good-bye, “Lady Dolittle,” we’ll get another “Lady Dolittle.” We own that name and the five other names you write under.’ He was equally hard-boiled about the sales of his magazines. He had the world plotted out into squares, and he’d sell a May issue in the nearest square, and then change the cover and sell the same issue as a June issue in the next square, and so on, until he’d covered the globe. He said everything he did was all right . . . that his readers were people who wouldn’t read anything else and that it was better for them to read something than nothing. Besides that, his stories were always moral—the poor girl always beat the rich city villain. He’d completely justified himself. And the point of the whole story was that his ambition was eventually to start, when he had enough money, an ultra-conservative publishing house which would publish only the best even at a loss.”

David let some more sand fall through his fingers.

“People are wonderful, aren’t they?”

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He looked down again at Anita.

He felt oddly intimate with her, but entirely well disposed and completely gentle. He wondered if, after all, a platonic attitude toward a charming woman were not possible. He felt intimate with Anita in a way he had never felt before with a woman; as if he could see the hidden veins and firm hidden fibre that made her breasts, and the hidden muscles along her ribs, and the red vessel of her heart. But this only made him more gentle and well disposed. He seemed to have penetrated the surface bewilderment of flesh to its fundamental gravity below. Heretofore all his intimacy with women had been separated into compartments; moments of companionship, moments of intellectual intimacy, moments when the body blotted out everything else. And there had been little interpenetration of these moments. Small realisation that body was a companion, and that companionship was not just company but included the silent going along, too, of body and mind, and that all the while you were holding a woman in your arms, her mind, like yours, was at work. Men were incredibly selfish and unimaginative in their attitude toward women. Largely unvicarious. Most of them secretly believed that women were receptacles. . . . Receptacles for every purpose—mental, spiritual, physical. Receptacles for passion and for male opinions.

David knew that some of the sense of intimacy he felt, Anita could not share or know anything about. Under her brief, tight-fitting bathing suit of red jersey he remembered every line and every shadow of her, caught in that dazzling minute of two weeks before. Some time when he knew her better he might tell her about that minute, but not yet. Often when he lay on the beach with her, as he was lying now, he thought about that minute, but, once more, always in a way that surprised him, for he found only increased gentleness and

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increased reluctance to say or do anything that would disturb the delicate balance.

He began to wonder if perhaps the earnest, humourless people who were banding themselves into absurd little colonies all over the world might not be on the right track after all. Certainly the human body, rightly regarded, was a touching thing; often beautiful, often magic, often made gross by abuse, but always, even at its worst, pathetic and friendly and close.

But no—the earnest humourless people . . . at least, in their methods . . . weren't right. They weren't the right sort of people to begin with. They were too much the material out of which cults were made. Too much the people who at one time or another had tried walking in the dew, only to be crippled by poison ivy, or who had danced by dusk in rings, hunting self-conscious fairies. The mentally passionate, but physically unpassionate, early feminists and socialists; the plastic dancers. The Eugene O'Neills and Lady Gregorys, and Bernard Shaws, and Rebecca Wests, and Lady Astors, and Schmalhausens, and Keyserlins, and the other arid, antic thinkers. The great clan of smart-Alechood. Paradoxically enough, the salvation of anything lay not in the aloof and intellectual, but in Matthew Arnold's ordinary sensual man awakened and refined. When the time came, he arose, stirred, and acted. And it was not the cults that stirred him. They were merely the first thin wave of a general tide.

The only value of cults was to accentuate the follies of both reaction and radicalism and so hasten the coming of moderation and common sense. Always you were driven back upon the individual.

David shifted his position.

"Asleep?" he asked.

Anita opened her eyes and smiled.

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"It's nice, isn't it," she said, "that you're here and I'm here? I liked you right away in New York that night, but I like you even better here."

It was the first time she had mentioned that night in New York.

"I'm nicer," said David. "I don't smoke so much, drink so much, or sit up so late."

She sighed.

"I'm nicer, too."

She sat up, brushed the sand from her legs, and ran her fingers through her hair. Then she jumped to her feet, pulling David with her.

"Swim!" she ordered. "Anita, come on—swim!"

"I'm finishing my wall."

"Finish it another time."

The water within the half-moon of coral was quiet and deep, stirred only a little by the trade wind. If you sank your face into it, you could see the clear sand bottom across which the rays of the sun drifted in whorls and prisms.

"Beyond the reef," said David, swimming on his side, "are sharks, barracuda, and a current that would take us to St. Hildegard."

"So I've heard," said Anita. "Well—don't let's go there. Doesn't Anita swim like a fish? She learned in Wisconsin where we used to have a camp."

She too was swimming on her side and she looked at David with the wide impersonal stare of the swimmer. At the back of her eyes were the dancing lights that were there when she was happy.

They came to the coral reef, standing a foot or so above the water, wet and covered with growth.

"Pull yourself up," said David, "but carefully, so you won't scratch yourself, and look over."

The water suddenly changed. It was of a deeper and

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greener colour, and the swift current that ran like a river broke the placidity of its depths, but you could see ferns moving and schools of small gay fish.

"I don't like this," said Anita. "If a wave should come we might be drawn out."

David laughed.

"Not a chance. I've never seen it rough here, have you?"

"Let's go back and have tea at my house."

"All right. . . . I haven't seen your house yet, you know."

"That's true—'Adventure's' so much nicer. But Uncle Julius is out to-day with a couple of Senators and the Governor, poor dear! The Senators and their wives came in on the *Santa Barbara* this morning."

They dressed among the sea grapes and turned the roadster homeward. Anita, Second, on the back seat, filled with health and salt wind, chanted a song of her own invention:

*"Fly she fairy,
The moon come up."*

"You play, don't you?" asked David.

Anita the elder shrugged her shoulders.

"After a fashion."

"And sing?"

"In the same fashion."

"I'll bet you sing in a very sweet, rich voice, carefully restrained and a little absent-minded."

Anita snorted.

"Do you?"

"Won't you sing and play after tea? I haven't heard a musical sound on St. Birgitta except in the Governor's movie palace."

"Perhaps."

In the dusk Anita's small flamboyant garden was silent and colourless. "There's music," she said, turning toward the

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harbour. On its dark surface a great blunt arrow of light moved toward the entrance, and the sound of a band came up to them . . . the *Santa Barbara*. "Not bad," Anita reflected, "on a soft exciting night like this, is it? The beautiful young men you're just beginning to get to know, and the interesting older man who'll barely look at you, and cocktails on the after deck." She sighed. "But they're tired—the tourists, and you don't know how wives and husbands can quarrel if they're tired and add a cocktail or two. I suppose the essential resentment comes out." She laughed. "David, I hope you never become as cynical as I."

"Well, that's all right," said David. "That isn't cynical. Of course there's an essential resentment, but what difference does it make?"

She led the way into her small drawing-room, white walled, long windowed, the green, jalousied shutters closed. The room had a tropical simplicity relieved by the books, pillows, and photographs, and pieces of brocade Anita had brought with her.

"Tea or a swizzle?"

"A swizzle."

"That's better."

"Won't you play?"

"Very well, if you're tired of my conversation."

"I adore your conversation."

Anita sat down at the piano. A small lamp on the piano shelf cast a downward light on her profile. David realised how fine and sensitive this profile was; a trifle sad in repose, perhaps, as if its owner thought a great deal secretly and not too happily.

"Do you like old songs?"

"Yes—if they're good ones."

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“Here’s one.”

*“As I came up through Dublin city
At the hour of twelve in the night,
What should I see but a Spanish lady
Washing her feet by the candlelight.
First she washed them, then she dried them,
Over a fire of amber coals,
In all my life I never did see
A maid so neat about her soles.”*

*“As I came back through Dublin city
At the hour of half past eight,
What should I spy but a Spanish lady
Brushing her hair in the broad daylight.
First she tossed it, then she brushed it,
On her lap lay a golden comb,
In all my life I ne’er did see
A maid so fair since I did roam.”*

*“As I came up through Dublin city
As the sun was about to set,
What should I see but a Spanish lady
Catching a moth in a golden net.
First she spied me, then she fled me,
Lifting her petticoats over her knee,
In all my life I never did see
A maid so blithe as that Spanish lad-ie.”*

“Oh, lovely!” said David from his place on the couch.

“What a lovely lady! Sing some more.”

“And my voice is restrained and absent-minded?”

“A little bit—but it adds to a song like that. Sing it over again.”

“All right.”

Molly came in with two swizzles on a tray and several letters.

“Here’s the mail, Mrs. Fulton. The mail that came in on the steamship this morning.”

“Thanks.”

Anita stood up, a swizzle in one hand and the letters in the other. She put her glass down on the piano, and looked at the addresses. Over one she paused momentarily.

“Do you mind?”

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"Not in the least. Go ahead."

David left the couch and walked over to a table, standing with his back to Anita. He knew from her utter silence, broken only by the rustling of paper, that she was reading something that interested and perhaps disturbed her. Staring up at him from a leather frame was the photograph of Anita's husband, his ill-humoured handsome face framed above by black curly hair and below by a soft shirt open at the neck. "Like a damned motion-picture actor!" thought David contemptuously. "God, how I'd dislike him! I hope I never see him again. He doesn't even sneer grimly—he sneers contentedly, and that's rotten."

"Eugene's lost a lot of money," said Anita in a small voice. David turned about.

"Does that affect you?"

"Not seriously. I have a fair income of my own. But what will happen to him? He's never worked."

"Won't his mother take care of him . . . or you?" David did his best to keep belittlement out of his voice.

"She's lost most of her money, too; and she's very ill. I don't think she can live much longer. Yes, he can have my money, but Gene's proud—he'd hate that."

She looked away from David, studying thoughtfully the lamp on the piano.

"Then he'll have to work," said David, "and it's no easy time for an untrained man to get a job—nor a trained one, for that matter."

"Some of the people he's wasted money on might give him one."

David was harsh.

"Yes . . . just watch them."

He lowered his head and looked up at Anita critically. His hands were in the pockets of his white linen suit.

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"I thought you were down here getting ready for a divorce?" he said. "That's what your uncle implied."

Anita turned upon him swiftly and angrily.

"He's quite wrong. I wish he wouldn't say such things. He hates Gene. I'm down here trying to straighten things out in my mind. I don't believe in divorce if it can be avoided. I've seen too much of it around me. I think you ought to stick if you can, especially if you have a child. Anita adores Gene—he's very charming, you know. Besides, if you've once loved a man, how do you know you won't love him again? . . . In a different way. . . . When things are ironed out. . . . As time goes on. . . . How do you know? My mother and father fought for years, and then in the end they were extraordinarily happy."

"I'm sorry," said David.

"It wasn't your fault." Anita's voice softened. She looked down at the rug. "Divorce is never easy, you know, no matter what people say, and down here, in this quiet, simple place, it seems harder and sillier than ever." She looked up and smiled suddenly, her long eyes opening. "I'm the one who ought to be sorry. Sit down and drink your swizzle. There—on that long chair. Don't bother about me. . . . I've had Gene on my hands for some time. On our wedding night he got drunk. That was just at the end of the glorious, post-war, flaming youth period."

David, taking her suggestion, stretched himself out comfortably and began to sip his drink.

"I'd love to be of use if I could. Maybe my advice . . ."

From the couch, Anita shook her head firmly.

"No. . . . I think not. I'll never bother you unless I have to. I'm not good at talking about my own affairs."

David looked at her.

STRUTHERS BURT

"I wish to God they were my affairs. I hate to see people worried."

She raised her head, startled.

He smiled.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean that as it sounded. . . . You must have thought me a fool. I merely meant that I was getting to be an excellent friend of yours."

Her eyes shone.

"Thanks. . . . Will you stay to dinner?"

"I can't. I've promised Mr. Jorgenson I'd go to the movies with him."

"Tell me about Mr. Jorgenson. Will he take me fishing some time?"

David walked down the hill to his lodgings. The soft night and the sharply descending, empty street set him apart. He felt extremely well—his breath coming just as breath should come, his legs moving strongly and easily. And he was unaccustomedly content. Life was lovely, and recently it had been at times completely good. Shadows like this, and a new scale of smells, and lamplit rooms, and nice people! He was uplifted by the general niceness of people. For years he had thought most of them horrid. But they *were* nice—most of them—if you gave them a chance. If you didn't hurry them, or crowd them, or over-ride them, or get them drunk. He thought of the subways back in New York. Poor devils crowded into them. . . . Fish fry! Big fish eating little fish! Mr. Wack was right in his contention that people were constantly surprising you by their niceness and fineness, and life by its unexpected beauty. Mr. Wack claimed that he was a pessimist so abysmal that people frequently mistook him for an optimist. He started with the assumption that all people were wretched and nothing good

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was going to happen, and then—constantly—he was being surprised.

David chuckled.

There was the smell of the harbour . . . damp and dark.

Anita was a marvellous girl. Thank God he wanted nothing of her !

There was a night when David saw Anita dance. Perhaps because time was so gentle in St. Birgitta, and the chances for observant intimacy so great, perhaps because David's mind was attuned by the quiet of the country, but, from the beginning, he had found himself painting in his mind a portrait of Anita deeper toned and far more shadowed with nuance than any he had before painted of a woman. It was as if, as has been said, every now and then he was privileged to look into the unsuspecting mind of another to find there the core of the lonely individual; the person of secret actions and secret thoughts. It was as if, at moments, he penetrated into the country where walks the creature who laughs and chuckles to himself. Who is so glad that he cannot smile. So sad that he cannot weep. Who is angry without showing it, and hurt when he seems most gay. Who has thoughts so terrible, or so beautiful, that he hesitates even to think them.

David, however, did not believe that it was entirely the circumstances of his present life which had endowed him with this clarified sight. He felt that there was more to it than that. He had always, on occasion, suspected that events were too oddly arranged to be entirely haphazard or coincidental, and now he was assured that he and Anita had been selected, in the vague way in which Fate works, for that rarest and finest of relationships, a lucid friendship between a man and a woman.

It was a warm and starry night when he had watched Anita

dance. And then, lest she know that he had watched her, he had walked down the hill and back again to her porch, arriving innocently half an hour later. She would have laughed, of course, had he broken in upon her dancing, but here was some mysterious grave gaiety that should not be intruded upon.

The night was very dark except for the stars.

Coming up Anita's walk through the small, overgrown garden, he had heard the sound of a phonograph playing a waltz, and climbing the steps to the porch, he had paused by a long window. As a rule he went in by one of the long windows.

Anita, dressed in dinner pyjamas, was dancing . . . delightedly, seriously, raptly. Her slim figure in its coat of shining pink silk and trousers of pale, shining blue, seemed like a scarf of silk blown by the wind. Her hair shone in the lamplight and her eyes were long and reflective and shining. On the white walls her shadow followed her. She danced beautifully; around the room and up and down, slowly and quietly. She seemed a shaft of coloured moving light. The waltz ended and she stood for a moment, her head thrown back, thinking. Then she went to the phonograph and put on a new record, and waited poised until it began.

David recognised Debussy's "La Cathédrale Engloutie"; the great engulfing notes, the wet sounds of the horns and woodwinds.

"The essential woman," he thought, "dances as the essential man leaps and runs, or slaps a friend on the back. Whenever they are happy they dance in their minds—but they don't often let people see they are doing it."

He went down the hill and came back again.

He was filled with the tenderness that is inescapable when the reserve which surrounds another personality is pierced.

[To be continued.]

Our Contributors

D. H. LAWRENCE was born in 1885 in Eastwood, a small mining town in Nottinghamshire, the fourth of five children of a coal miner. At the age of twelve he won a scholarship at Nottingham High School, and after teaching for several years in a local elementary school, spent two years at Nottingham University. He writes of much of his early life in his third novel, *Sons and Lovers*. At the age of twenty-three he came to London, was introduced to Mr. Edward Garnett and others in the literary world, and soon after published his first novel, *The White Peacock*. In 1912 he married in Germany, returning to England just before the War. In 1919 *The Rainbow* was suppressed, and this, and his feeling about the War, emphasised his antagonism to the British bourgeois public. From 1919 for two years he lived in Sicily, writing *Women in Love*, *Sea and Sardinia*, etc., settling later in Ceylon and in Australia, and later again in Mexico, when he wrote *St. Mawr* and *The Plumed Serpent*. In 1926 he returned to England, but being unable to face the climate, decided to settle once more in Italy, where he died in 1930.

The story in this issue was recently found amongst his papers and has not hitherto appeared in print.

FRITIOF NILSSON, more popularly known as The Pirate, was born thirty-eight years ago in Vollsjö, a little village in South Sweden, near the Baltic. He was educated at the University of Lund, and practised law for a dozen years. The overwhelming success in Sweden a year ago of his first novel, *Bombi Bitt*, enabled him, however, to shake off the dust of jurisprudence, which he never loved, and devote himself entirely to writing. He has written a play, several short stories, and a second novel which has just been published in Sweden. In the Scandinavian countries, his reputation as a humorist is an established one, but almost more than that, he is a faithful and colourful chronicler of the life, customs and people of his own part of Sweden—faithful to the spirit, and colourful in the letter.

The story in the present issue has been translated by Paula Wiking, who is also the translator of *Bombi Bitt*, published last autumn.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG was born in 1882 and was educated at Charterhouse and Cambridge. He served in France with the 8th Btn. The Middlesex Regt. His best known novels are *The Stepson*, *St. Christopher's Day*, and *Mr. Darby*. He has just published another novel entitled *The Foster Mother*. He is equally well known as a writer of short stories and on the shelves of connoisseurs of this art and on those of collectors of first editions his *Bazaar*, *Sir Pompey*, and *Madame Juno* and other short story volumes find a prominent place. A volume of his Selected Poems was published recently which included his best known poems, *Miss Thompson Goes Shopping*, *Honey Harvest*, and *The Vintage*.

ANDRÉ MAUROIS was born in France in 1885, and was educated at the Lycée de Rouen. He was made C.B.E. and awarded the D.C.M. for his services with the British Army during the War. He is an Officer of the Legion of Honour, Hon.D.C.L. Edinburgh and Hon. Doctor of Letters, Princeton. M. Maurois is as well known in this country as in France, and most of his books have been translated and had a large public here, where he is regarded as the foremost interpreter of his time between the two countries of his adoption. His best-known books are: *Colonel Bramble*, *Ariel*; *a Shelly Romance*, *Byron*, *The Life of Disraeli*.

MARIAN BOWER was never educated, she tells the Editor; not, that is, in the modern sense of the word. She learned the use of the globes and the art of deportment from the same governess who had introduced these branches of erudition to her mother.

Starting life with a predilection for variety in the matter of spelling, from that day to this she has been almost as impartial in the distribution of vowels or the doubling of consonants as were our Elizabethan ancestors. Arithmetic, it is true, was supposed to be inculcated by an individual who came once a week, and was spoken of as Herr Professor. But as Herr Professor had fought in the Franco-Prussian War, and the one certainty about her calculations was that, only by accident did two and two come out at four, the small girl found it not without advantage to turn Herr Professor's mind away from, say, fractions to his soldiering days. And, by the time he had charged once again at Gravelotte (he called it St. Privat), it was a matter of as much indifference to him as it was to her, whether it required one or more of those "damned dots" to solve the problem. Miss Bower's best known novels are *Gotobedde Lane*, *The Quince Bush*, and *Swan's Battle*. A new novel *Sisters Circus* will be published in the Autumn.

PETER DELIUS is the pen name adopted by a young writer of whom more is likely to be heard. He or she is the author of a very successful novel, *Nursing Home*, published last month, of which the Manchester Guardian said:

"A story that is in every way enjoyable. And though our glimpse of the patients and the staff of the nursing home are necessarily brief, we soon learn to recognise them all with pleasure and leave them with regret. We do not remember having seen this author's name before; if this book is a first novel, it is a creditable beginning; if it is not, it is a good recommendation to us to look for his other books. It is also that rare thing an essentially happy book."

LEO WEISENBERG was born in 1900 in Baku. As a young man he enrolled in the Volga-Caspian Fleet and carried on political and instructional work among the sailors. From the fleet he was sent to the Leningrad University, and after graduation devoted himself to research work in the history of Western European literature. Meanwhile he wrote introductions and prefaces, and edited some dozens of books translated into Russian.

His first work was a biography of Jack London for school children. Then two more biographical tales, *The Conqueror of the Sea*, *Robert Fulton*, and *The Mechanic of Greenock*. Later, after returning to Baku, he wrote *The Story of Petrol*, a detailed description of the petrol workers on the Apsheron peninsula.

MAXWELL STRUTHERS BURT received his degree from Princeton University in 1904 and later studied at Merton College, Oxford.

He began his writing career as a reporter on the *Philadelphia Times*, and shortly afterwards removed to Princetown as an instructor in English. In 1908 he became interested in the cattle business in Wyoming, where he generally lives throughout the summer. During the World War he served in the U.S. Air Force. Of recent years he has devoted his time to writing, spending his winters in North Carolina, and his summers on his ranch. His first book, *In the High Hills*, was published in 1914, and preluded a long line of successes culminating in *Festival*, the choice of the Book Society in 1931.

His wife, Katherine Newlin Burt, is also a writer of established reputation.

